



REVISED DRAFT: “CHOOSE YOUR ACTON” ALTERNATIVES

NOTES

- **How Alternatives are Defined:** The three alternatives differ in the location, amount, and in the “look” and form of development patterns that would result going forward. The actions contained in the alternatives differ both in type and degree.
- **Shared Actions:** Following the descriptions of the alternatives, there is a list of actions that could fit – more or less – with any of the alternatives. These actions are

See Revised Goals and Objectives and Preliminary Strategies document for some preliminary thoughts regarding strategies that would apply for all three alternatives
- **Evaluation:** Alternatives will be evaluated using the goals and objectives as an evaluation tool. The evaluations will be quantitative or qualitative as applicable to the goal/objective.
- **Later Composite Alternatives:** It is possible that a finally selected alternative will be a composite of several of the three described here. Desirable elements from each can be combined to form a final selected plan.
- **Items that could easily be transplanted** to or from any alternative are outlined in a box.
- **Shared Assumptions:** All three alternatives have some common underlying assumptions, such as continued declining household size and continued regional and sub-regional economic and population growth, continued household income growth, continued reliance on the automobile as the primary means of transportation and maintenance of Acton as a retail subcenter (But there will be a qualitative consideration about how “wild cards” such as variances from these assumptions would affect the outlook.)
- **Descriptions:** The following descriptions include key features that characterize the alternative and samples of its potential actions and positive and negative impacts



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ALTERNATIVE 1:
Do Nothing Different
(Continue Incremental Change)

This alternative continues existing policies and practices governing the type and location of development, resulting in incremental changes that continue recent trends.



Key Features

- Encourage cluster residential development
 - Over 600 acres of open space have been preserved to date with use of the OSD and PCRC zoning provisions
 - Based on current ratio (859 housing units/ 605 acres preserved), future predicted open space preserved through OSD/PCRC would be _____.
- Small scale commercial development and small-scale affordable housing development without a specific geographic focus.
- Continued open space acquisition/protection and historic preservation as opportunities arise and resources permit.
- Continued extending sidewalks at current rate of construction
- Based on assumptions about the rate of residential development, buildout would occur sometime between 2040 and 2050 with a total of 10,200¹ units.

¹ Estimate from To Live in Acton; it will be updated as part of the analysis of this alternative.

ALTERNATIVE 1: Do Nothing Different (Continue Incremental Change), continued

[Sample] Potential Actions

- Continued use of PCRC and OSD as the preferred method for residential development
- Continued implementation of the current Village zoning provisions
- Continued use of Community Preservation Act funds for qualified projects including historic preservation, affordable housing, and open space preservation
- Continued emphasis on small scale economic development including business recruitment and job retention
- Continued conventional and open space retention subdivision review and approval
- Continued development of affordable housing by the Town and 40B developers

[Sample] Positive Impacts

- No new legislation or administrative support required.
- Town retains its existing spread-out “leafy” character
- Continues past practices of good planning and development regulation
- Etc.

[Sample] Negative Impacts

- Traffic will become more of a problem than now.
- Town remains susceptible to 40B projects.
- Fiscal implications of current housing trends on school enrollments and resulting budgets
- Etc.



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ALTERNATIVE 2:
Limit Residential Growth and Retain Existing Character

This alternative aims to retain the existing settlement pattern and to avoid change in the existing physical and demographic character of the Town. Its objective is to limit demands on existing facilities and services. It includes commercial development in non-residential locations to provide fiscal benefits.



Key Features

- Limit the pace of residential growth while promoting specific kinds of commercial growth
- Limit actual growth (as opposed to its spatial distribution in the village-oriented alternative)
- Focus on redevelopment of Great Road commercial land for retail and restaurant uses
- Develop large employment-oriented commercial complex along Rt. 2 (e.g. high tech/ R&D offices)
- One or two **Avalon-type** developments to meet the 10% affordable level to opt out of 40B susceptibility, preferably with “friendly” 40B actions
- Tax income generated from economic development can be used to purchase open space, thereby limiting development and maintaining existing character
- Accelerate purchase priority open space parcels

ALTERNATIVE 2: Limit Residential Growth and Retain Existing Character, continued

[Sample] Potential Actions

- Consider building permit limitations and/or tie to infrastructure (e.g. sewer/ water and physical capacity of schools).
- Consider impact fees on residential development.
- Down-zone the golf course to reduce residential development intensity
- Hire an Economic Development Officer
- Extend **sidewalks along Great Road**
- Traffic calming at key intersections along Great Road
- **Strong design review** of new economic development and redevelopment
- Explore transfer of development rights from residential “sending” areas to commercial “receiving” areas.

[Sample] Positive Impacts

- Better assurance of not requiring new school expansion with resulting fiscal burden
- Commercial development will increase Town revenue which in turn could facilitate open space protection and reduced tax rate (or more services)
- Retention of key open space parcels
- Limited growth in traffic
- Later and potentially lower residential build-out.

[Sample] Negative Impacts

- Possible challenges to growth limiting measures such as capping annual building permits and transferring development rights.
- More stringent vigilance (and staffing) required in reviewing development proposals and administering environmental protection measures.



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ALTERNATIVE 3:
**Guide Growth to Villages and
Enhance Their Character**

This alternative aims to move toward a more sustainable settlement pattern and to enhance the physical character of the six villages (including Kelley's Corner). Its objective is to be more efficient in the use of Town facilities and services and to shift the type and location of new residential development to better fit Acton's changing demographics (i.e., stage in the life-cycle and socio-economic background). It includes a variety of housing types including smaller units together with small scale commercial development in mixed-use village centers.



Key Features

- Limit and guide growth geographically through infill and redevelopment of existing village centers and potential village centers (e.g., Kelley's Corner)
- Expand village boundaries
- Decide on growth priorities (decide which village(s) to focus on first)
- Make transportation investments such as sidewalks and traffic calming in and around the villages
- Develop and implement a **Housing Production Plan** that encourages affordable housing on small, scattered sites in the villages; this would provide relief from unwanted 40B developments.
- Develop opportunities for recreation near village centers
- Preserve and develop small vest pocket parks and tot lots in villages
- **Develop Kelley's Corner** into more of a village and as a transportation hub (for example a "pulse" type minibuss shuttle)

ALTERNATIVE 3: Guide Growth to Villages and Enhance Their Character, continued

[Sample] Potential Actions

- Conduct a study of the villages and create village overlay districts so that each village has its own distinct identity
- Strengthen design review in the villages
- Re-think dimensional requirements in the village overlay districts
- Use transfer of development rights (TDR) to direct new housing to villages and away from open land
- Expanded transportation investments:
 - Fixed-route shuttle with stops at the villages
 - Expand sidewalks and bike lanes/paths going in and out of villages
 - Develop path system independent of streets
 - Traffic management/calming more intensely in villages (e.g. speed tables at pedestrian crossings)
- Hire an **Economic Development Officer**

[Sample] Positive Impacts

- Development in villages will increase Town revenue which in turn could facilitate open space protection
- More opportunities for public gathering, communications and walking will be provided.
- More opportunities to create architecture in villages consistent with existing historic character.

[Sample] Negative Impacts

- Possible increased traffic congestion, traffic safety and parking issues in the villages.
- Potentially sooner and higher level of residential buildout (because incentive may be needed to transfer development rights)
- Town revenues may not be as great as they might be because smaller residential units will replace larger ones with higher assessed value. This may be offset by fewer school children being produced in smaller village residential units.

ACTIONS SHARED BY ALL ALTERNATIVES:

- Continued management of wastewater and stormwater by the Health Department with input from the Water Resource Advisory Committee
- Ongoing funding for the town shuttle at current or expanded level of service
- Limited extension of sewer lines and/or creation of new package wastewater treatment systems.
- Continued use of groundwater protection district zoning to protect water supply
- Continued management of water supply and encouragement of conservation by the Acton Water District
- Continued application of sign regulations
- Continued use of design review
- Other changes to improve the zoning bylaw to implement current policies
- Continued management and incremental improvement of municipal facilities and schools
- Consideration of new community center and/or senior center
- Consideration of new North Acton Fire Station
- Sustainability efforts within the scope of existing land use and natural resource policies, such as encouragement of ride-sharing, home energy conservation improvements, and recycling.