

# DRAFT



## ALTERNATIVE 1 Disperse Growth: Extend Current Trends / Continue Present Planning Policies

### *Focus on:*



*Continuing use of cluster zoning to protect open space*



*Encouraging small scale commercial development, especially in villages*



*Continuing open space acquisition/protection*

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

## Key Features

### Residential

- Encouragement of **clustering** when new residential development is proposed
- **Small-scale affordable housing** without a strong geographic focus\*

### Commercial

- **Small scale commercial** development in scattered locations.

### Open Space and Historic

- Continued **open space** acquisition/protection and **historic preservation** as opportunities arise and resources permit.

### Transportation/Circulation

- Continued extending of **sidewalks** at current rate of construction
- Continued **bikeway** development
- Extension of funding for **MinuteVan shuttle** at current level of service

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\*The Avalon 40B development was an exception to this trend.

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## ALTERNATIVE 1 Disperse Growth, continued

### Positive Impacts

- Continued **encouragement of Planned Conservation Residential Communities** as the preferred method for residential development. (Over 600 acres of **open space** have been preserved to date with use of Acton's cluster zoning provisions).
- **No new legislation** or administrative support required.
- Town builds on its **existing dispersed pattern**.
- **Continues past and current practices** of effective planning and development regulation.
- Because of declining school enrollments, this alternative has a **fiscal benefit** (costs lower than revenues) of \$4.5 million compared to today.

### Negative Impacts

- **Traffic** will become more of a problem than now.
- Town remains **susceptible to 40B<sup>1</sup>** projects.
- Development in villages and Kelley's Corner may not fit with or improve their **character**.
- Less efficient use of **public infrastructure and services**

### Typical Outcomes

- **Villages** continue to look much as they do today.
- **Kelley's Corner** changes only incrementally.
- **School enrollments** decline gradually.
- **Home values** (adjusted for inflation) similar to today.
- **Large parcels of open land** likely to develop, potentially with protection of part of the parcel through cluster zoning.

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<sup>1</sup> 40B is a state law that allows affordable housing developments to vary from local zoning

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## ALTERNATIVE 2 Limit Growth: Limit Residential / Expand Commercial / Acquire Open Space

### *Focus on:*



*Limiting the residential growth rate; no change in type or size*



*Encouraging employment-oriented low-impact commercial development*



*Increasing open space acquisition*

This alternative aims to retain the existing settlement pattern and avoids changing the existing physical character, and consequently the demographic character, of the Town. Its chief focus is to control residential growth in order to curb the demands on existing facilities and services. It also encourages employment-oriented commercial development to provide fiscal benefits and finance acquisition of open space and trail easements.

## Key Features

### Residential

- **Limit the amount and pace** of residential growth without limiting the type and size of new housing units, resulting in **more detached, often large, single-family houses**

### Commercial

- Promote **employment-oriented development** (e.g. high tech/ R&D offices) in areas that don't directly impact neighborhoods: Great Road, Nagog Park, Powdermill, and large commercial parcels on Rt. 2

### Open Space

- Use tax income generated from economic development and higher Community Preservation Act surcharges to **accelerate purchases of open space**

### Transportation/Circulation

- Focus effort on **traffic improvements** and **limited sidewalk expansion**

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## ALTERNATIVE 2 Limit Growth, continued

### Positive Impacts

- **Slower growth** based on building permit **limitations tied to infrastructure capability** (e.g. sewer/ water and physical capacity of schools) and potential impact fees for new development.
- **Better assurance of not requiring new school expansion** with resulting fiscal burden.
- Commercial development will **increase Town tax revenue** which in turn could facilitate **open space protection**, reduced the **tax rate** and/or support more **capital investments** or services
- Retention of key **open space** parcels.
- **Limited growth in traffic** in residential areas.
- Later and potentially lower **residential build-out**.
- Potential **local employment** opportunities which would reduce commuting time and carbon emissions related to commuter driving.
- Because of lower school enrollments and fewer units, this alternative has a **fiscal benefit** (costs lower than revenues) of \$5.1 million, compared to today

### Negative Impacts

- **Possible legal challenges** to growth limiting measures such as capping annual building permits and impact fees.
- **Market** for large scale office/R&D **is uncertain**
- **More vigilance and more staffing** required in reviewing development proposals and building permit limitations.
- **Less emphasis** on transportation measures (such as **sidewalks, bikeways, and shuttle** service) that would encourage less driving than today.
- Potential increases in **traffic** at some locations due to commercial development

### Typical Outcomes

- **Villages** continue to look much as they do today.
- **Kelley's Corner** changes only incrementally.
- **School enrollments** decline more than other alternatives.
- **Home values** (adjusted for inflation) increase somewhat compared to today.
- Some **large parcels of open land** likely to develop, potentially with protection of part of the parcel through cluster zoning; other parcels protected by purchase.
- **Large office/R&D** built on south side of Rte 2 (Auto Auction and adjacent commercial parcels); potential overpass to westbound roadway



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## **ALTERNATIVE 3 Concentrate Growth: Guide Growth to Key Town Centers**

***Focus on:***



***Directing residential growth  
to mixed use infill and  
redevelopment***



***Transforming existing  
commercial development  
to fit village character***



***Emphasizing walking,  
biking and public  
transportation***

This alternative aims to guide growth to key town centers (such as Kelley's Corner, several of the existing villages, and other potential centers) with strong design review to protect the Town's historic fabric and existing neighborhoods. It includes a variety of housing types including smaller units together with small scale commercial development in mixed-use village centers.

## **Key Features**

### **Residential**

- Limit and guide growth geographically through **infill and redevelopment** of existing village centers (West Acton and South Acton) and potential village centers (East Acton and Kelley's Corner)

### **Commercial**

- Develop **Kelley's Corner** into a **town center** and **transportation hub**
- Redevelop **village commercial** areas into **mixed use** that respects the existing village character

### **Open Space and Historic Preservation**

- Use strong **design review** to protect **historic character**
- Develop opportunities for **recreation near village centers** and small vest pocket parks and tot lots in villages
- Encourage **transfer of development** away from open land to desired growth centers

### **Transportation**

- Concentrate transportation investments such as **sidewalks** and **traffic calming** in and around the villages
- Build **MinuteVan shuttle** into a more comprehensive system

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## ALTERNATIVE 3 Concentrate Growth, continued

### Positive Impacts

- Each **village** has its own distinct **identity** and new development is sited and designed to enhance and protect existing residential and **historic character**.
- More **efficient** in the use of Town facilities and services.
- More **sustainable** development pattern.
- **Utilizes existing sewer capacity** in South Acton and Kelley's Corner.
- The type and location of new residential development better **fits Acton's changing demographics** (i.e., stage in the life-cycle and socio-economic background).
- More **opportunities for public gathering**, communication, and walking will be provided.
- Because of lower school enrollments and smaller units, this alternative has a **fiscal benefit** (costs lower than revenues) of \$5.3 million, compared to today.

### Negative Impacts

- **Possible increased traffic** congestion, traffic safety and parking issues **in the centers** that receive new development.
- Potentially sooner and higher level of residential **buildout** because incentives will be needed to transfer development rights to centers.
- **More vigilance and more staffing required** to review development proposals and achieve adherence to new design standards.
- Significant **public infrastructure improvements** (such as sewers or package wastewater treatment) **needed** in some of the centers.

### Typical Outcomes

- **Villages** become denser with redevelopment of non-residential parcels; stronger design review preserves and enhances existing character.
- **Kelley's Corner** becomes a busy, walkable town center.
- **School enrollments** decline more than Alt 1, less than Alt 2.
- **Home values** (adjusted for inflation) similar to today's outside villages; may increase relative to today's in villages.
- Some **large parcels of open land** likely to develop, potentially with protection of part of the parcel through cluster zoning; other parcels protected by transfer of development to key town centers.