



PROPOSED PLAN CONCEPT

Guide Growth to Key Town Centers/ Expand Commercial/ Acquire and Protect Open Space

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



Continuing use of cluster zoning to protect open space



Encouraging employment-oriented low-impact commercial development



Increasing open space acquisition

Main Idea

The proposed plan aims to guide growth to key town centers (such as Kelley's Corner, South Acton and West Acton) with strong design review to protect the Town's historic fabric and existing neighborhoods. Additionally the plan proposes:

- a variety of housing types including smaller units together with small scale commercial development in mixed-use village centers
- employment-oriented development on Rt 2 and other locations that would not impact neighborhoods.
- that the Town acquire and preserve open space, through both acquisition and zoning mechanisms and it would consequently reduce residential development of large open parcels.
- an emphasis on sidewalks, bicycle accommodation, and public transportation.

Key Features

Residential

- Limit and guide growth geographically through **infill and redevelopment** in and around existing centers (West Acton, South Acton and Kelley's Corner)
- Utilize cluster zoning for most residential development outside the centers

Commercial

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

- Use tax income generated from economic development and higher Community Preservation Act surcharges to **accelerate purchases of open space**
- Provide incentives for **transfer of development** away from open land to desired growth centers (thus preserving the entire open parcel) and cluster zoning for the development that does occur outside the centers (thus preserving half of the parcel).
- Develop opportunities for **recreation near village centers** and small vest pocket parks and tot lots in villages

Protection of Village Character and Historic Resources

- Prepare strong design guidelines for Kelley's Corner and Villages to which growth is guided, with incentives dependent on preserving character and compatibility with historic resources.
- Use strong **design review** to protect **historic character**

Transportation

- Concentrate transportation investments such as **sidewalks** and **traffic calming** in and around the villages
- Provide bicycle accommodation through both off-road paths and on-road improvements (e.g., bike lanes and wider shared lanes)
- Build **MinuteVan shuttle** into a more comprehensive system providing access between villages, Kelley's Corner, commercial areas, and the MBTA commuter rail.

Key Features, continued

Water Resources Management and Protection

- Prioritize Kelley's Corner development, which has sewer service.
- Consider extension of sewer to West Acton Village to serve redevelopment of the commercial area north of Massachusetts Ave and can also serve existing high priority neighborhoods identified in the Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan.
- Utilize advanced package wastewater treatment with groundwater recharge for other concentrations of residential and commercial development.
- Monitor groundwater quantitative and quality and plan for necessary Water District service expansion, quality improvements, and well-head protection.

Schools and Other Town Facilities

- Work through the Acton Leadership Group as enrollments decline and commercial development occurs to allocate increased fiscal capacity to educational improvements (such as reduced class size) and spending on other priorities such as open space acquisition, affordable housing, and investments in transportation improvements and other infrastructure.

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 gradually as the population ages and the housing mix in the new development shifts to smaller units.
- **Home values** (adjusted for inflation) similar to today's outside villages; may increase relative to today's in villages.
- **Many large parcels of open land will be protected** through acquisition and transfer of development rights to the centers; **however, some are still likely to develop**, potentially with protection of part of the parcel through cluster zoning.

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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, partially offset by needed infrastructure investments and open space acquisition, by 2030 this alternative is expected to **increase fiscal capacity** by **\$XXXX million**, compared to today.

Negative Impacts

- **Possible increased traffic** congestion, traffic safety and parking issues **in the centers** that receive new development.
- Potentially 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 sidewalks and streetscape) **needed** in some of the centers.

Implementation Implications (need for research)

- **Explore ways in which municipality can be more proactive in guiding growth** to the villages (e.g. more active role in Transfer of Development Rights)
- **Investigate precedents** (e.g. multiple village development in one municipality, mixed use, Transfer of Development Rights)
- Determine how to **strengthen economic development** objectives
- Determine how to **secure open space** preservation priorities