



## **CHOOSE YOUR OWN ACTON: PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

### **Alternatives for Action**

Thursday, June 23, 2011, 6:30 p.m.  
Acton Town Hall, Room #204

**Purpose:** The purpose of this meeting was to present three alternative courses of action that would meet the previously developed planning goals in a variety of ways and to differing degrees. The main objective was to seek input on these alternatives as we move forward in the process of selecting a preferred course of action. This workshop represents a continuation of the community conversation that will result in formulating recommendations for a comprehensive community plan for the future of Acton.

### **Process**

Prior to the discussion, the Consultants and committee members presented a PowerPoint slide show summarizing the process to date and the alternatives to be discussed at the meeting. Information in the slides was also summarized in handouts distributed to participants.

The presentation was followed by small break out groups, where among other things, attendees were invited to discuss the alternatives with an assigned partner. They were then asked to evaluate these using a worksheet as a guide. Finally facilitators led the small group discussions of the alternatives using a series of exercises designed to further understand people's thoughts and opinions regarding the alternatives.

Following the small group discussions the group reconvened and continued to discuss the alternative that was selected by the majority, including how to improve upon it, what concerned people about it, and how future trends may influence the Town's growth and development.

The forum was well attended and was characterized by a high energy level and productive dialogue. Over one hundred (100) people were in attendance. The discussion was lively and participants seemed very engaged. Their contributions to the process were productive and thoughtful.

There was general consensus regarding the overall direction people desired the Town to take, as well as a sense communicated that participants feel strongly that there is a need for additional opportunities to gather, to feel more connected as a community, and a desire to become more proactive in planning the Town's future.

## Key Themes:

The following are the key themes that emerged from the discussion at the public workshop. Input was solicited in a number of ways (see appendices for more detailed notes and a summary of the alternatives):

### Alternative 3 clearly preferred

What people seemed to appreciate most about this alternative:

- Community gathering, qualities including vibrant people-oriented villages with places to go and opportunities to gather and mingle, including opportunities for more theater and music
- Energy savings due to walkability
- Protection of open space in outer areas
- Efficient use of infrastructure

Overall seemed to want to **also focus on:**

- Open space preservation/acquisition
- Preservation of historic character through historic preservation efforts and strong design review
- Employment-oriented development
- Limiting growth and protecting rural characteristics
- Sidewalks/bikeways/public transport (Minuteman van), traffic calming/mitigation

What people seemed to want to pull in were their **CONCERNS** regarding:

- Preservation of open space
- Ensuring that Alt. 3 is feasible
  - Relying solely on zoning and incentives for Alt. 3 might not work
  - Feeling that more needs to be done to make it work (review the 1990 Master Plan emphasis on village development and why that didn't work)
  - Concern that Alt 3 will result in development in both the villages and other areas in town

### Additional Issues

- Most participants seem to support the creation of a joint community/senior center. Suggested locations include village center, NARA and K-mart.
- Not many participants responded to the question regarding emergency response to North Acton and of those, there was no clear majority opinion.
- In terms of additional service and facility needs participants called for gathering places and better maintenance of existing facilities.

**EXPRESS YOUR PREFERENCE - TOTAL NUMBER OF "DOTS"<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Alt 1</b>	<b>4</b>
Continue bikeway development	<b>26 1/2</b>
Open space acquisition/protection & historic preservation as resources permit	<b>20</b>
Small-scale affordable housing	14
Small scale commercial development	10
Sidewalk extension at current rate	8 1/2
Extend MinuteVan shuttle	8
Clustered residential development	7
<b>Alt 2</b>	<b>21 2/3</b>
Limit the amount and pace of residential growth	<b>27</b>
Promote employment-oriented development	<b>25</b>
Substantially accelerate purchases of open space with tax income from economic development	<b>18</b>
Traffic improvements	<b>16</b>
Focus effort on traffic improvements	5
Limited sidewalk expansion	5
More detached, often large, single-family houses	3
<b>Alt 3</b>	<b>51 1/3</b>
Develop Kelley's Corner into a town center and transportation hub	<b>40</b>
Protect historic character with strong design review	<b>40</b>
Redevelop village commercial areas into mixed use	<b>26</b>
Develop recreation opportunities in/near village centers	<b>25</b>
Limit/guide residential growth to infill and redevelopment in and around existing centers	<b>17</b>
Encourage transfer of development away from open land, creating protected open space	<b>16</b>
Concentrate investments on sidewalks and traffic calming and expand MinuteVan shuttle system	0

<sup>1</sup> Participants were asked: "If you had to choose one alternative as the base or foundation to build on – which one would you choose? Use one large green dot to indicate your preferred alternative and five small yellow dots with which to highlight any key features you like best, regardless of which alternative they are listed under."

