



# BEST PRACTICES PRECEDENTS

## Issue: “Village” Center

**Concept:** Reinforcing and strengthening the existing land use and socio-economic patterns of Acton’s villages as the organizing structure and main setting for the town’s social, economic and public life.

### What do we mean when we use the word village?

The community has expressed an interest in continuing to pursue the goal of having a series of village centers as places to gather, shop, eat, and even live. What most people seem to desire is small-scale development with unique shops, coffee shops and restaurants and other places to gather. They would like these to be walkable and bicycle-friendly places located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods (see Acton Voices below for more detailed description of residents’ thoughts). Actonians are also concerned about the compatibility of new development with the town’s character.

**How do we make existing and potentially new village centers more vibrant centers of town life?** Adding housing units above shops and in in-fill development in and around village centers results in a larger market for shops. Recruiting more and more diverse shops will result in more places to go. Ensuring that walking and biking is safe and pleasant and planning events in and around the streets makes for a livelier street life. Village centers need to become more of a destination with a distinct sense of place.

### But focusing on village centers did not result in much after the last master plan...

According to the previous master plan: “Village-based planning was not supported mainly due to discrepancies between what wished for and what market has brought forward.”<sup>1</sup> As a reaction to the fact that the previous master planning efforts did not bring about the desired results in terms of the degree of village-type development, this master plan is proposing more aggressive regulatory measures and stronger incentives.

### Should we choose one or more village centers to work on first?

There seems to be a significant degree of consensus regarding the desire for a town center in addition to appreciation for the potential for a set of village centers in different parts of Acton. Many residents have pointed to Kelley’s Corner as the most feasible and desirable location to create a “town center”. The fact Kelley’s Corner is centrally located, with good access from many parts in town, within walking distance from the school campus, as well as the fact that there are relatively few landowners makes it a prime candidate for the first phase of implementation.

### What are some examples of village centers we can look to as models?

Concord, MA; Lexington, MA; Arlington, MA

#### Acton Voices: “What is an ideal village center and how can we enhance ours?”<sup>2</sup>

- *Walkability*
- *Events*
- *Unique and fun window shopping*
- *Locally-owned shops, “buy local” campaign*
- *Anchor with pulling power*
- *“quaint but not cute” – each village with its own distinct character*
- *Slow traffic, plant flowers and trees, move towards mixed use*
- *Invite ethnic community to contribute vitality through celebration and food*
- *Activities including parks, outdoor areas to congregate, grocery store.*

<sup>1</sup> Master Plan Update, Town of Acton, MA, Dec. 1998

<sup>2</sup> Responses by Acton residents in variety of forums held during Phase I of the planning process.



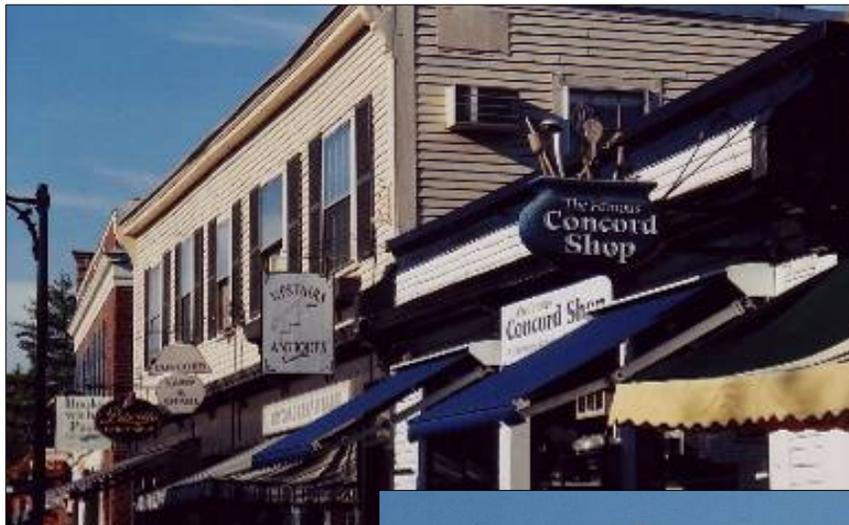
- 
- *Family restaurant, benches, variety of businesses, parking in back of buildings, place to go at night, pleasant lighting.*



## PRECEDENTS: Village Center

### Concord Center, Concord, MA

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Desirable Features:</b><br><i>(physical, programmatic)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feels like a destination</li><li>• Signage is interesting, attractive, and “blade type,” oriented to pedestrians</li><li>• Shops are one of a kind, small-scale</li><li>• Some housing over shops</li><li>• Diversity of shops and restaurants</li><li>• Plenty of accessible parking but tucked away in back</li></ul> |
| <b>Contributing Context:</b>                                  | surrounding residential community can walk to center, tourists brought by bus provide additional market   |
| <b>Strategies to Accomplish:</b>                              | strong design guidelines and design review, strong sign by-law which promotes creativity, village overlay district, Concord Business Partnership  |



Interesting, creative, and attractive signage oriented to the pedestrian contributes to the visual vitality of Concord Center





Mixed Use: Housing above retail



Rear Entrances: the back side of buildings are welcoming



Pedestrian amenities



Connectivity: pleasant and accessible connection between parking and shops



Aesthetically pleasing, accessible parking tucked away behind buildings



## PRECEDENTS: Village Center

### Lexington Center, Lexington, MA

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Desirable Features:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed use, compact development</li> <li>• Interesting and aesthetically pleasing design with public walkways</li> <li>• Outdoor gathering spaces</li> <li>• Easily accessible by bike (located along bike path)</li> <li>• Parking located behind retail establishments</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>Contributing Context:</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant numbers of housing units within walking distance from center</li> <li>• Some housing above retail (more recent development)</li> <li>• Variety of shops and restaurants</li> <li>• High school within short walking distance of center</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Strategies to Accomplish:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passed beer and wine liquor by-law allowing smaller restaurants without full liquor license</li> <li>• Economic Development Officer hired with much focus on center activities</li> <li>• Some parking shared with area institutions (e.g. churches)</li> <li>• Changed zoning to allow housing above retail</li> </ul> |



Sidewalks with pedestrian amenities for resting, meeting and greeting





## Lexington Center, Lexington, MA Continued



Mixed Use: Housing over retail



Depot Square: open space near bus stop with benches and grassy areas for gathering; concerts are held here in warm months



# PRECEDENTS: Mixed Use Development

## The Village Commons, South Hadley, MA

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Desirable Features:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed use, compact development</li> <li>• Interesting and aesthetically pleasing design with public walkways</li> <li>• Outdoor gathering spaces</li> <li>• Parking located behind retail establishments</li> </ul> |
| <b>Contributing Context:</b>     | Main corner opposite town green and Mt. Holyoke College  |
| <b>Strategies to Accomplish:</b> | Redevelopment of college-owned parcel  |



Aerial View



Building along the street edge, parking in rear



Informal gathering place



## The Village Commons, South Hadley MA Continued



Directory of businesses and tenants



An entrance through an outdoor seating area



# PRECEDENTS: Mixed Use Development

## Mashpee Commons, Mashpee, MA

**DEVELOPER:** Cornish Associates Limited Partnership



2007 master plan indicating approved street and block locations for the Jobs and Whittings residential neighborhoods

Typical view of pedestrian street at the corner of the Commons.

Traditional urban configuration of apartments and offices above shops





## PRECEDENTS: Mixed Use Development

### Highlands Garden Village, Denver, CO

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>ACREAGE and DENSITY:</b> | 27 acre site, 291 homes, as well as 200,000 square feet of commercial and live/work space, 140,000 square feet of open space. Average housing density for the project is 13 dwelling units/acre. |
| <b>DEVELOPER:</b>           | Perry/Affordable Housing Development Company   |



Plan view

The Elitch Theater which occupied the site in its former use as an amusement park was preserved as an arts and performance space.



Ground views



## PRECEDENTS: Mixed Use Development

### Photo Gallery Illustrating Village-Type Developments



Duplex Housing, Arlington, MA



An Alley Converted to a Pedestrian Court, Adams, MA



Discount Shopping Mini-Mall in Manchester Center, VT



Gift Shop with Flower Garden in Woodstock, VT



Outdoor Concert in Village Center, Stratton, VT



Outdoor Seating Area/Cafe in Arlington Center, MA



## PRECEDENTS: Multi-family Housing

### Concord Commons, Concord, MA

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>ACREAGE and DENSITY:</b>      | 56 unit condominium development in 2 buildings<br>2.3 acres, 24 dwelling units per acre  |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>                 | On the western edge of West Concord Village, located on Conant Street just north of, and adjacent to, the MBTA commuter rail line  |
| <b>BUILT:</b>                    | 2006   |
| <b>DEVELOPER:</b>                | The Boynton Company/The Tambone Investment Group   |
| <b>APARTMENT UNIT PRICES:</b>    | \$315,000 - \$550,000 (current prices; a block of 25 units was sold at discounted prices at auction in 2008)   |
| <b>ASSESSED VALUE (2011):</b>    | \$24,220,000 (Average per unit = \$432,500)  |
| <b>ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAXES:</b> | \$319,460 (Average per unit = \$5,700)   |
|                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 56 units consist of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom luxury condominiums in four story buildings with elevators.</li> <li>• Units range in size from 1,269 to 1,814 sq. ft. in floor area.</li> <li>• There is very little open space on the site of Concord Commons. Some of it is occupied by open parking. There is additional covered parking under the buildings.</li> </ul> |



Concord Commons Aerial View



Ground Views of Concord Commons





# PRECEDENTS: Multi-family Housing

## Concord Greene, Concord, MA

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>ACREAGE and DENSITY:</b>      | 220 unit condominium development in 31 buildings<br>25 acres, 8.8 dwelling units per acre   |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>                 | On the eastern edge of West Concord Village, between Route 62 (Main Street), Route 2, Baker Avenue and the MBTA Commuter Rail Line  |
| <b>BUILT:</b>                    | 1976 - 1978   |
| <b>DEVELOPER:</b>                | Comeau Development Company  |
| <b>APARTMENT UNIT PRICES:</b>    | \$284,000 - \$422,000   |
| <b>ASSESSED VALUE (2011):</b>    | \$77,600,000 (Average per unit = \$352,700)   |
| <b>ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAXES:</b> | \$1,023,500 (Average per unit = \$4,650)  |
|                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 220 condominiums consist of 1- and 2-bedroom apartment-type units and 3-story townhouses, ranging in size from 1,070 to 1,593 sq. ft. in floor area.</li> <li>In addition to the buildings, Concord Greene has three small ponds made from damming a stream that meanders from the Assabet River, under Route 2, through a marsh and Concord Greene, under Baker Avenue, and back into the river. There is also a small apple orchard, a rock grotto, and a plot of community gardens with a mixture of vegetables and flowers. There are also two tennis courts, a club house with an exercise room and a swimming pool.</li> </ul> |



Concord Greene Aerial View



Concord Greene Units





# PRECEDENTS: Multi-family Housing

## Russell Place, Arlington, MA

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>ACREAGE and DENSITY:</b>      | a 40 unit, 11 building condominium<br>4.5 acres, 9 dwelling units per acre  |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>                 | On the edge of Arlington Center, between the Minuteman Bikepath and town- and church-owned recreational playfields  |
| <b>BUILT:</b>                    | 2002 - 2004   |
| <b>DEVELOPER:</b>                | Collins Development   |
| <b>APARTMENT UNIT PRICES:</b>    | \$350,000 to \$600,000  |
| <b>ASSESSED VALUE (2011):</b>    | \$15,824,800 (average per unit = \$395,620)   |
| <b>ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAXES:</b> | \$196,386 (average per unit = \$4,910)  |
|                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a variety of floorplans available in units at Russell Place with optional features and finishes. Features available in some units include fireplaces, skylights, cathedral ceilings, and decks or porches. Features available in some units include fireplaces, skylights, cathedral ceilings, and decks or porches.</li> <li>• Large three-level townhouses have garage bays underneath with additional driveway spaces, some units are primarily on one level with loft-style rooms above, other flats have finished lower level space.</li> <li>• The units have central air conditioning and varying levels of finishes in the kitchens.</li> <li>• Garage parking and that there is additional driveway parking.</li> </ul> |



Aerial View



Ground Level View

| #  | Style | sq.ft. | Rm | Br | Ba  | Pkg | Ask \$  | Sold \$ | Orig \$ | Date  |
|----|-------|--------|----|----|-----|-----|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| 44 | 2Lvl  | 1226   | 4  | 1  | 2.5 | 1   | 425,000 | 420,000 | 349,900 | 06/05 |
| 28 | 2Lvl  | 1236   | 4  | 2  | 2.5 | 1   | 449,900 | 449,900 | 359,675 | 07/05 |
| 2  | TH    | 2285   | 6  | 3  | 2.5 | 2G+ | 649,000 | 637,500 | 601,850 | 10/05 |
| 14 | TH    | 2092   | 6  | 3  | 2.5 | 2G+ | 639,900 | 610,000 | 600,250 | 03/06 |
| 10 | Flat  | 987*   | 6  | 2  | 2   | 2   | 479,000 | 475,000 | 422,500 | 03/06 |
| 29 | Flat  | 987    | 5  | 2  | 2   | 1   | 429,000 | 415,000 | 392,725 | 10/06 |
| 5  | Flat  | 1198** | 3  | 1  | 2.5 | 2   | 409,900 | 391,000 | 368,615 | 11/06 |
| 13 | Flat  | 1267** | 4  | 1  | 2.5 | 1   | 359,000 | 350,000 | 369,900 | 11/06 |
| 23 | TH    | 2077   | 6  | 3  | 2.5 | 2   | 539,000 | 513,800 | 428,525 | 04/08 |
| 35 | TH    | 1921   | 5  | 2  | 2.5 | 2   | 519,000 | 530,000 | 404,175 | 06/08 |

\* Not including finished lower level      \*\* Includes finished lower level



## PRECEDENTS: Multi-family Housing

### The Legacy Apartments, Arlington, MA

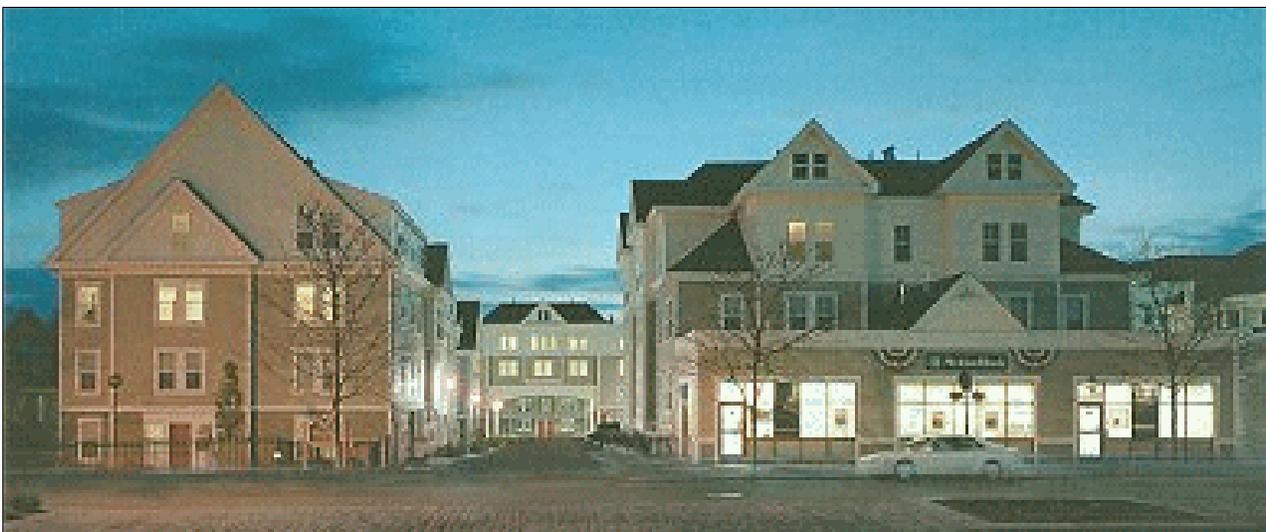
|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>ACREAGE and DENSITY:</b>      | 134 rental unit project in 4 buildings<br>2.75 acres, 49 dwelling units per acre   |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>                 | Directly in Arlington Center, between the Minuteman Bikepath and Massachusetts Avenue.                                       |
| <b>BUILT:</b>                    | 2000   |
| <b>DEVELOPER:</b>                | Diversified Funding Inc./Mirak Management Co.  |
| <b>OWNER:</b>                    | Mirak-Bendetson Development , LLC  |
| <b>APARTMENT UNIT PRICES:</b>    | From \$1,500/mo. for a 1 bedroom unit (773 to 939 sq. ft.)<br>From \$1,850/mo. for a 2 bedroom unit (1,061 to 1,744 Sq. ft.) |
| <b>ASSESSED VALUE (2011):</b>    | \$23,237,200   |
| <b>ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAXES:</b> | \$288,400  |



Legacy Apartments Aerial View



Legacy Apartments Ground Rear View



Legacy Apartments Ground Front View