



DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Population and Housing
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Open Space and Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Facilities and Services
- Land Use and Zoning
- Sustainability

Today. Tomorrow. Together.

The following is a summary of the extensive research and data collected for the Inventory of Existing Conditions section of the Comprehensive Plan. Information was collected using the traditional master plan elements, and is therefore presented under the following headings:



- 1. Population and Housing
- 2. Economic Development
- 3. Natural Resources
- 4. Historic and Cultural Resources
- 5. Open Space and Recreation
- 6. Transportation and Circulation
- 7. Facilities and Services
- 8. Land Use and Zoning
- 9. Sustainability

For a more complete description and discussion see Volume II of the Plan.

**EXISTING
CONDITION**

Population
and Housing

Population and Housing

Population and housing are the prime measures and indicators of growth and stability in a community. If a community wants to be in control of its growth it takes steps to manage its rate of housing development – to slow or accelerate it, to encourage or discourage housing types, such as single- or multi-family housing, or steer housing to desired locations. Population, income, age structure and diversity are key indicators of community character. Type of housing stock is also an important community characteristic. Housing stock has various dimensions such as architectural types, density of residential development, and age, condition and historic importance of residential buildings.

Acton’s population is expected to continue to grow relatively slowly, as it has in the recent past, because it is running out of prime developable land and has wastewater disposal constraints (see Volume II, Facilities and Services). There are significant shifts in the age composition of Acton’s population. These shifts are important because they indicate what types of services and facilities and housing will be needed in the future. Households are expected to grow more quickly than population because household size is expected to continue to decline, a

trend that has been observed since 1990. There are 343 lots ready for residential construction. Potential demand estimates for housing units by 2020 (213 new units) suggest that all new forecast units can be accommodated on lots already approved. Currently 7.2% or 548 units in Acton are considered affordable, using Commonwealth of Massachusetts statutory definitions.

Summary of Key Points

- Acton has a moderate overall housing density of about 0.4 acre per housing unit. At current and projected rates of residential growth Acton will come close to, but not exceed its buildout capacity by the year 2030, based on existing zoning.
- In 2010 the average selling price of a single-family home was \$498,750. The average selling price of a condominium unit was \$280,000.
- About 5% of Acton’s housing stock is sold each year. This has averaged about 400 sales per year, but has fallen in recent years owing to the economic downturn.
- Forty-seven percent of Acton’s households could not afford to buy an average priced house in Town.

Acton Voices*

“Mansionization makes housing not affordable and [negatively] affects Town character.”

“There is a need for more site plan review and subdivision and design review of new housing developments.”

“Stop single-family development to reduce pressure on open space and to reduce pressure on schools.”

“We need a variety of housing types – to support people with different economic resources as well as different ages and needs.”

“Houses are expensive” (as response to “what are the three most important challenges you feel face Acton?”)

“There is more affordable housing than in other comparable communities.”

“My most important concern regarding aging, is aging in place in my home and being able to afford the taxes.”

“Control residential growth because it adversely impacts class size at the schools.”

Over one-third (37.5%) of the survey respondents said that would like to see more affordable housing in Acton, and more than half (69.3%) said that they would like to see more historic homes protected and preserved.

Over one-third (36.7%) of the respondents to a mail survey said they would like to see LESS of one or more of the following: “development,” “building,” “housing,” “construction,” or “apartments.”

** public input from Phase I of the planning process*



- Seven and two-tenths percent (7.2%) of Acton’s housing stock is classified as officially affordable, meaning it is deed restricted into perpetuity, and counts toward the Town’s 10%.
- Between 1998 and 2010, 375 units of affordable housing have been created, a rate of 31 per year. Residential uses pay 87% of all property taxes in Acton.

Population

- Population growth has slowed in recent years.
- There have been and will continue to be significant shifts in the age and ethnic structures of Acton.
- Acton’s population is highly educated.



Housing and Households

- There is likely to be a demand for about 1,000 new housing units over a 20-year period after the housing market revives. This may not be fully realized by 2030.
- There has been a shift in housing construction from 4 and 5 bedroom units to 2 to 3 bedroom units. This is likely to continue.
- The fastest growing category of households are those headed by females with children under age 18.

Existing Housing Stock

- Seventy-six percent of Acton’s housing stock has been built in the last 50 years.
- About 6% of Acton’s housing units are vacant.
- Acton’s housing stock is predominately single-family detached units. Since 2000 building permits for 773 new residential units have been issued.

Housing and Land Use

- Acton has a moderate overall housing density of about 0.4 acre per housing unit.
- At current and projected rates of residential growth, by 2030 Acton will come close to, but not exceed its buildout capacity, based on existing zoning.

Table 1.5: Past and Projected Number of Households, Housing Size and Housing Units

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Households	6,600	7,495	8,187	8,909	9,316
Housing Units	6,891	7,680	8,530	9,176	9,595
Population per Household	2.74	2.69	2.68	2.59	2.57

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and the Collaborative

Housing Tenure

- Seventy-four percent of Acton’s housing is owner-occupied.
- The average length of stay for a household in owner-occupied units is 17 years.
- The average length of stay for a household in renter-occupied units is 7 years.

Housing Market

- In 2010 the average selling price of a single-family home was \$498,750. The average selling price of a condominium unit was \$280,000.
- About 5% of Acton’s housing stock is sold each year. This has averaged about 400 sales per year, but has fallen in recent years owing to the economic downturn.



Housing Affordability

- Forty-seven percent of Acton’s households could not afford to buy an average priced house in Town.
- Seven and two-tenths percent (7.2%) of Acton’s housing stock is classified as affordable, meaning it is deed restricted into perpetuity, and counts toward the Town’s 10%.
- Between 1998 and 2010, 375 units of affordable housing have been created, a rate of 31 per year. This includes public housing rental units administered by the Acton Housing Authority and privately developed rental and ownership units.

Taxes

- Residential uses pay 87% of all property taxes in Acton.

Table 1.13: Median Sales Price of Housing in Acton and Surrounding Towns through September, 2010

	2000 Census Year-Round Housing Units	Subsidized Housing Inventory Units	Percent
Acton	7,645	548	7.2%
Boxborough	1,900	24	1.3%
Carlisle	1,647	20	1.2%
Concord	6,095	363	6.0%
Littleton	3,018	245	8.1%
Maynard	4,398	365	8.3%
Stow	2,108	143	6.8%
Sudbury	5,582	280	5.0%
Westford	6,877	347	5.0%
Subregion Totals	39,270	2335	5.9%
Statewide Totals	2,526,963	243,630	9.6%

Source: The Warren Group, Banker and Tradesman

Table 1.13: Median Sales Price of Housing in Acton and Surrounding Towns through September, 2010

	All Housing Units	Rank	Single-Family Units	Rank
Acton	\$459,900	4	\$498,750	4
Boxborough	\$345,000	8	\$492,500	5
Carlisle	\$675,000	1	\$690,000	1
Concord	\$621,500	2	\$680,000	2
Littleton	\$389,250	5	\$400,000	8
Maynard	\$295,000	9	\$307,500	9
Stow	\$379,850	6	\$424,900	7
Sudbury	\$585,000	3	\$619,600	3
Westford	\$350,450	7	\$431,500	6

Source: The Warren Group, Banker and Tradesman

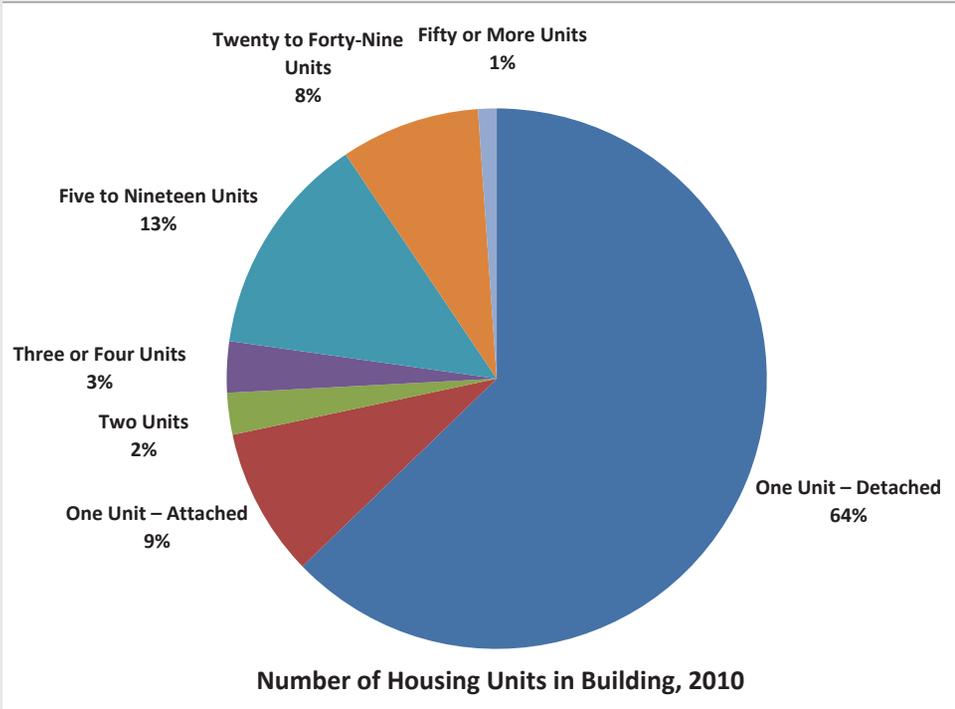
In conclusion, Acton has a strong and diverse economic mix of activities that provides a base for further growth. While further strengthening its role as a sub-regional employment center, Acton can improve its visual character by better design in new and redeveloped commercial and industrial properties.

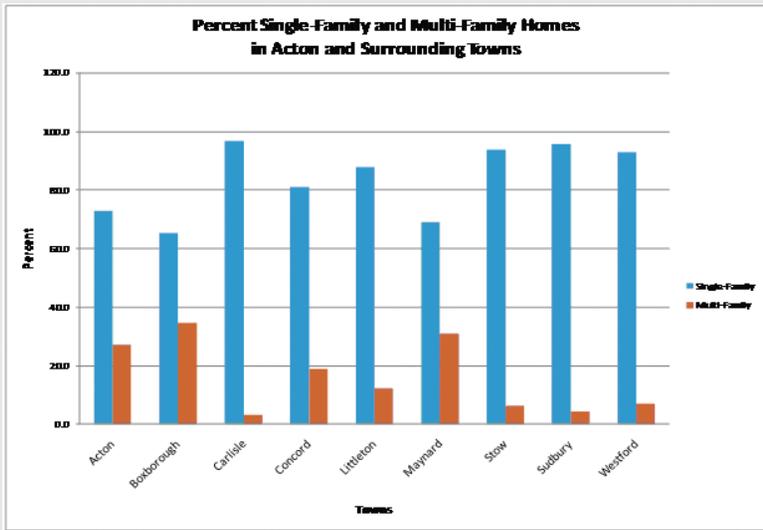
Opportunities and Challenges Posed by Population and Housing Existing Conditions

- Creating affordable housing is both a challenge and an opportunity to retain residents.
- It is a challenge to get renters to stay longer than 7 years on average.
- Building up residential densities in and around village centers is a challenge.
- Assuring that new housing created best matches likely demographic changes will be challenging but also an opportunity to develop a land use pattern that may be more sustainable.
- Matching residential growth to Town infrastructure and services capacities is a challenge.
- Creating more moderately priced market-rate housing and holding down municipal expenses to maintain or lower property tax rates will be challenging.

In conclusion, Acton is a very desirable place to live because of its schools and other municipal services, and the high quality of its

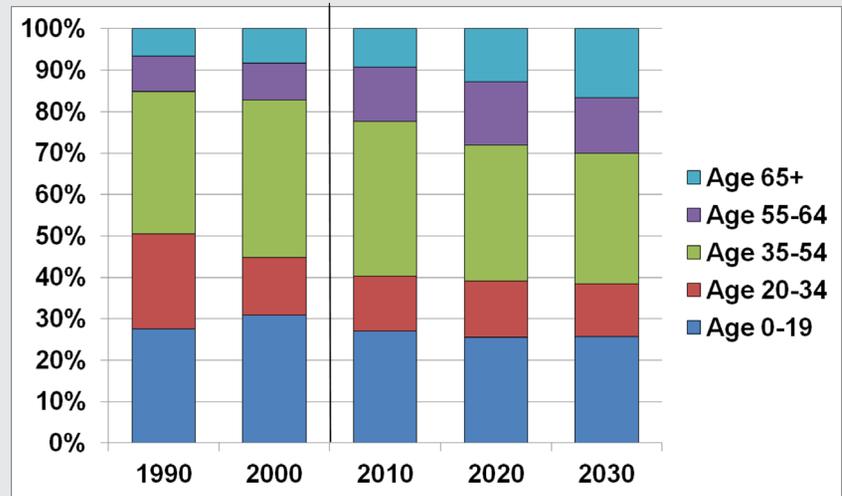
housing stock. Acton is, however, an expensive place to live, requiring relatively high household incomes to maintain the quality of one’s home, cover transportation costs, and pay the property taxes needed to support good quality Town facilities and services.



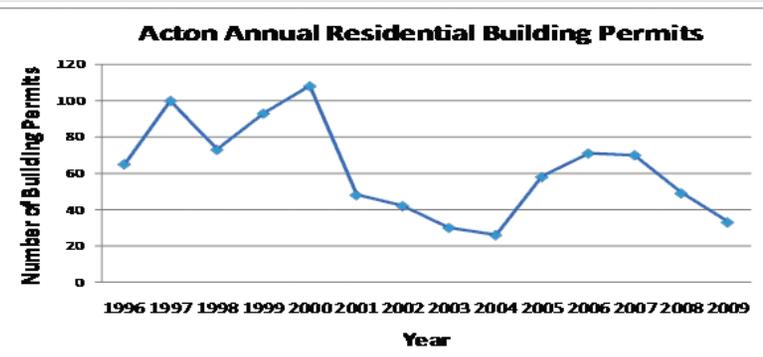


Source: 2000 Census of Housing updated with Building Permit data to 2010

Figure 1.3: Relative Shifts in Life Cycle Categories from 1990 to 2030



Sources: U.S. Census of Population, Acton Town Census for July 2010, and MAPC for future years



Source: 2000 Census of Housing updated with Building Permit data to 2010

**EXISTING
CONDITION**

2

Economic
Development

Economic Development

Economic development is important to achieving the Plan’s goals because employment is essential for economic well being, and because commercial areas contribute to the character of Acton. Providing opportunities to shop in Town may be important so people do not have to travel long distances to obtain essential goods and services. Finally, commercial development is a major source of tax revenue for the Town.

Employment has grown steadily in Acton when viewed over the long term. It is expected to continue to grow. Average establishment size is small (12 employees per establishment). There are about 11,000 people employed in establishments located in Acton. The Town accounts for 18.5% of total employment in the nine community sub-region made up of Acton and its surrounding towns. Acton has the most retail employment and retail sales of any of the nine communities but it is apparent that considerable retail purchases of Acton residents are made out-of-town. While some Acton retailers attract out-of-town shoppers, all of Acton’s retailers only capture less than half of in-town resident’s retail purchases. Acton has two rapidly growing employment categories that provide a basis for

future strong growth (Health Care and Social Assistance and Computer Systems Design and Related Services).

There were 11,757 people in the Acton Labor Force in September, 2010. In that month 11,079 of those people were employed and 678 were unemployed, resulting in an unemployment rate of 5.8%. This is considerably lower than the statewide rate of 8.0% and the national rate of 9.0%. Acton’s lower unemployment rate results from its well educated and highly skilled labor force.

Summary of Key Points

Employment Based in Acton

- Acton is an important employment center in its nine town sub-region. Concord and Westford are the other important employment centers. Acton is expected to remain an important sub-regional employment center.
- In 2010, on average, 11,248 people were employed in jobs located in Acton.
- In 2000 (the most recent year for which data is available) only 20.5% of jobs in Acton were held by Acton residents and 79.5% by residents of other cities and towns.

Acton Voices*

“It would be nice to have more places to shop and to eat to choose from.”

“We need more economic development to increase the tax base.”

“Improve regulations to encourage businesses (including permitting & signage.)”

“More needs to be done to improve the appearance of strip malls on Great Rd.”

“Reduce traffic and congestion and keep Town character; don’t overdevelop.”

“Restaurants” was frequently mentioned as a response to the survey question “What would you like to see MORE of?”

“Development” was frequently mentioned as a response to the survey question: “What would you like to see LESS of?” (comments were mostly directed towards housing, but also included big box, fast food, and strip malls as undesirable.)

“If you could do one thing to address economic development issues in Acton what would it be?” Response: “Space for solo-preneurs.”

** public input from Phase I of the planning process*

- Major categories of employment in Acton are retail trade, public administration including public schools, health care and social assistance, computer systems design and related services, education services (not including public schools), and eating and drinking establishments.
- Health care and social assistance and computer systems design and related services are the fastest growing categories of employment located in Acton (147% and 112% respectively, between 2001 and 2009).
- The average weekly wage in Acton establishments was \$938 in 2009, but it ranged widely from \$226 for used merchandise stores to \$2,346 for scientific research and development services.
- Average weekly wages ranged from \$226 (used merchandise stores) to \$2,346 (scientific research and development services).

Acton’s Labor Force

- In September, 2010 Acton had a labor force of 11,757 (Acton residents who hold jobs anywhere.)
- In September, 2010 5.6% of Acton’s labor force was unemployed (compared to a state-wide figure of 8.0%)

- The largest number of Acton residents are employed in the high wage/high education categories of management, computer/mathematical, educational/training/library, sales related, and office/administrative support.

Businesses

- There were 795 establishments in Acton in the second quarter of 2010, according to data from the Massachusetts Office of Workforce Development.
- The number of businesses has varied by about 10% in recent years although the number in 2009 is about the same as in 2001 (780).
- There are about 500 home based businesses in Acton, many of them not included in the 795 establishments listed by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development.
- Acton is a town of small businesses, with an average of employees per business in 2009; this includes only businesses recognized by the Department of Workforce Development.
- The value of retail sales in 2007 in Acton was \$644,864,000.
- Motor vehicle and parts dealers and food and beverage stores accounted for 58% of all retail sales in 2002 and 64% in 2007.

- Most of Acton’s commercial development is located along its numbered highways (Routes 2, 2A and 27) and in village centers.

Taxes

- Acton collects 87.1% of its property taxes from residential property and 12.9% from commercial and industrial property.
- For the last eight years, Acton has had the highest residential tax rate of all towns around it, except for Stow, which had a higher rate from 2003 to 2005.
- The average residential tax bill in Acton has been closer to the middle of the nine towns, but it has been consistently slightly above the average for these towns (See chart on page 37).



Opportunities and Challenges Posed by Existing Economic Development Conditions

- Floor-area ratios (the ratio of square footage in buildings to the area of the lot on which they are located) in industrial areas and the villages can be increased to obtain greater density and more intensive utilization of the land.
- It is possible to seek home rule authority to establish a differential property tax policy in order to encourage and retain start-up ventures, micro-business incubators, and micro-business cooperatives in Acton.
- A graduated commercial property tax increase, starting from a lower base, would make Acton desirable for start-up companies and entrepreneurs by reducing their operating costs for three to five years.
- Economic development and housing affordability are mutually dependent public policy issues. Businesses are attracted by a local labor force. Many businesses need lower skill workers with lower wages for maintenance, security, and clerical jobs. Affordable

housing helps to attract these kinds of workers and thus helps economic development.

- Commercial development can be focused on creating more local opportunities to shop for goods and obtain services, and publicizing the shopping opportunities that already exist.
- Existing strip commercial development is un-sightly but presents opportunities to redesign and redevelop it.

In conclusion, Acton has a strong and diverse economic mix of activities that provides a base for further growth. While further strengthening its role as a sub-regional employment center, Acton can improve its visual character by better design in new and redeveloped commercial and industrial properties.

Table 2.3: Growth in Employment in the Largest Sectors of Acton's Economy

Sector	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	% Growth 2001-2009
Retail	1680	1868	1898	1866	1677	< -1%
Educational Services	1080	1230	1097	1157	877	-18.8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	568	762	1121	1286	1403	+147%
Public Admin. including Public Schools	1178	1281	1197	1374	1301	+10.4%
Food Services and Drinking Places	688	548	585	674	621	-9.7%
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	387	322	459	828	820	+112%

Source: Series ES-202 Employment Data from the Mass. Department of Workforce Development.

**EXISTING
CONDITION**

3

Natural
Resources

Natural Resources

Acton’s natural resources provide services to the citizens of Acton. Clean water and air are critical for the Town’s future. Healthy ecosystems and habitats with a diversity of wildlife are indicators that families can live healthy lives and enjoy their surroundings. Measures to protect natural resources will be important strategies for the Comprehensive Plan. One of the primary ways to help preserve the Town’s character that was identified in developing a vision for Acton’s future was the preservation and additional acquisition of open space.

Acton has a varied topography and large forested and wetland areas supporting biodiversity, potentially including 9 state-listed rare plant or animal species. Surface waters are generally of good quality but are impacted by nutrients from storm water runoff, which the Town’s Storm Water Management Plan is designed to reduce.

Summary of Key Points

Geology and Topography

- The underlying bedrock is Nashoba Formation that dates back between 430 and 500 million years.
- Acton Granite, a younger intrusion into the un-

derlying formation, was a source of foundation stone for many older buildings.

- The topographic character of Acton is due to glacial activity that deposited glacial till, drumlins (Great Hill), kettle-holes (Grassy Pond), eskers (Acton Arboretum), kames (Forest Road west of Hosmer Street), and alluvial and swamp deposits along stream beds.
- The average elevation is about 230 feet, the highest point is 430 feet, and the lowest is 130 feet.

Soils

- In general Acton soil groups are moist, rough and stony in character with many areas of sandy loam. Wet soils are located in stream valleys and certain areas have ledge.
- High ground water, stoniness, and excessively drained soils present challenges for location of underground septic systems in many areas, but 80% of Acton homes use these systems. (See Volume II for further discussion.)

Surface Water Resources

- There are two major watersheds – Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook.
- Acton Stream Teams ([## Acton Voices*](http://www.acton-

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“Trees, open land, seasonal changes, stone walls, foliage, rural feel...make Acton unique.”

“The rural character and natural features are my favorite things about Acton.”

“I wish there was more wildlife in Acton.”

“I think the Town should acquire or by other means preserve more open space.”

“Protect and enhance wildlife corridors, including conserving diverse ecosystems: meadows, woods, lowland, upland.”

“What I enjoy most visually in Acton is its nice rural area look.”

“Preserve rural and historic characteristics,” was identified as the number one priority in six public meetings.

“One of the main reasons I moved to Acton was the green – trees and conservation land.”

“The cost of open space is very high... we will need to prioritize parcels.”

Close to one-half of the Town’s residents identified “rural character, agricultural land, and conservation land” as among the Town’s three most important assets.

“I would like to see less growth taking over open space ...and more preservation of wooded areas.”

“Acton used to be rural; it is turning into a city.”

“Great wonderful conservation land, trails, ponds, woods... ”

** public input from Phase I of the planning process*

streams.org) has done visual shoreline monitoring and educates the public about the Town’s 36 streams (more than 32 miles).

- The state has classified Acton’s surface waters, with the exception of Nagog Pond, as Class B. This classification indicates that the waters are generally suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation, may be used for water supply with appropriate treatment, and will provide good wildlife habitat.
- Nagog Pond (Class A) was assigned to Concord by the General Court in 1884 for its water supply.
- Excess nutrients are a problem in some of Acton’s surface water bodies. Much of the excess nutrients come from storm water run-off.



Drainage from impervious surfaces, parking lots, streets, and the roofs of structures impacts surface water quality. All of these sources of storm water run-off carry pollutants that end up in the Town’s wetlands and waterways. In response to these problems the Town has developed a Storm Water Management Plan and a Nonpoint Source Control Program. These efforts identify sources of pollutants and steps to mitigate their impacts.

- Acton watersheds account for 65% of the recharge of its groundwater aquifers – the source of the Town’s drinking water. The other 35% is contributed by watersheds that are not wholly within Acton.

Major Wildlife Resources

- Over the last 100 years, Acton, like many surrounding communities, has been transformed from a community dominated by fields and orchards, to one dominated by suburban development and forests.
- Acton includes five “hotspots” for biodiversity identified in the state’s BioMap 2 Project:
 - NARA/Wills Hole/Kennedy/Marshall Land/Nashoba Sportsman Club (partially



Town-owned and Zone II Wellhead Protection Area)

- Grassy Pond (partially Town-owned)
- Assabet River in the southeastern corner of Town, including a portion of Zone II Wellhead Protection Area
- Heath Hen Meadow, a wetland area and wetlands along the town boundary with Stow and Maynard, including a portion of a Zone II Wellhead Protection Area, and
- Reformatory Fields/Weatherbee Conservation Land, including portion of a Zone II Wellhead Protection Area.
- Acton has state-designated Priority Habitats of Rare Species.
- Acton has approximately 7,000 acres of forest

land (more than 50% of its total area). This total includes small private holdings such as back land on residential lots as well as larger forested areas on public open space.

- Wetlands, both forested and non-forested, comprise nearly 13% of the Town's area and are important habitats.
- There are 23 certified vernal pools and 142 potential vernal pools – important habitats for wood frogs, salamanders, etc.
- Acton includes habitats for 9 state-listed rare plant or animal species. These habitats are concentrated along the major brooks.



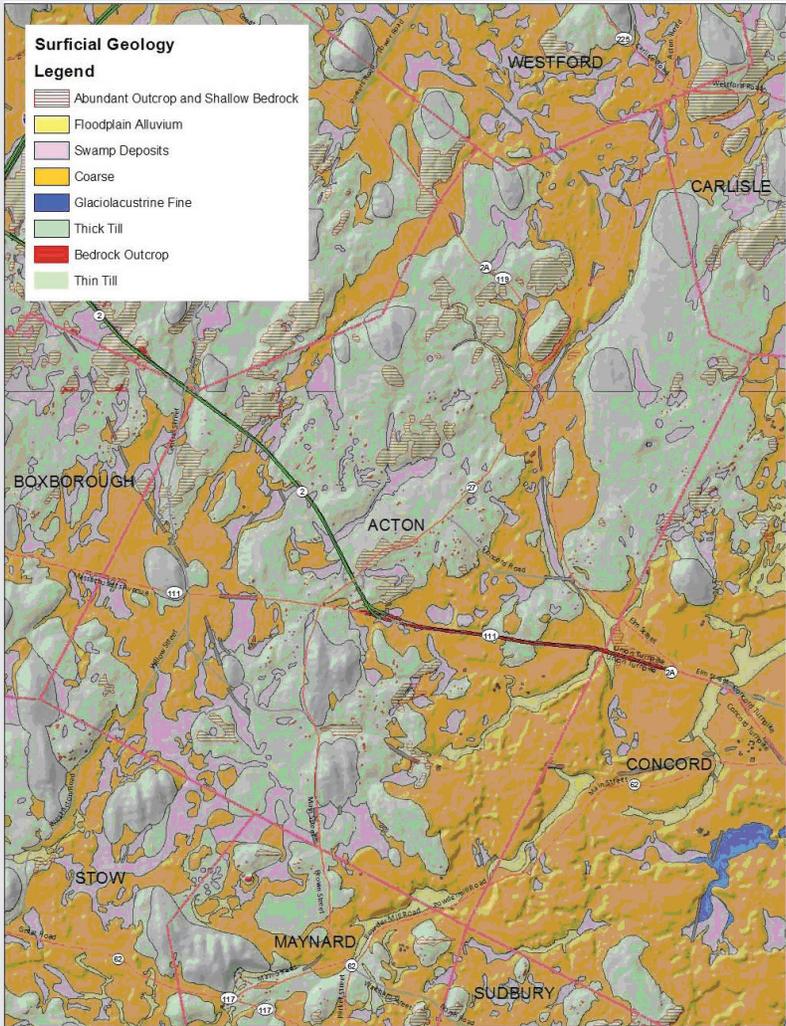
Opportunities and Challenges Posed by Existing Natural Resource Conditions

- Despite development, Acton has many important natural areas that enrich residents’ lives and contribute greatly to the Town’s character. The challenge will be to continue to protect those areas and resources.
- Acton soils represent a challenge for the operation of septic systems. The Board of Health will need to continue to be diligent in enforcing their regulations in order to protect water resources. (See the discussion of water and wastewater in Volume II.)
- Protecting surface water resources from pollutants in storm water will be a continuing challenge.
- Adding to already protected conservation land is an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity to protect additional wildlife and water resources and create connections between protected areas is contrasted with the increasing costs of acquiring land.

- Existing privately owned forested areas represent an opportunity to increase the size of existing protected forested areas.

In conclusion, Acton has a wealth of natural resources that contribute to the Town’s character and help to preserve biodiversity and water quality, but which require on-going effort to protect and preserve.

Figure 3.1: Surficial Geology



Natural Resources

Figure 3.3: Major Habitats



**EXISTING
CONDITION**

4

Historic and
Cultural Resources

Historic & Cultural Resources

Acton’s many historic and cultural resources are important and valued attributes that help establish the character of the Town and past efforts to preserve, promote, and enhance them attest to their value to residents.

Historic and cultural resources include both physical resources (buildings, landscape features, landscapes, and archaeological sites) as well as non-physical resources such as organizations, clubs, programs, and traditions, both of which contribute to the Town’s quality of life.

Acton’s rich history is well represented by the Town’s three historic districts (Acton Center, West Acton Village, and South Acton Village), and by individual houses, other structures, historic landscapes, and stone walls in many parts of Town. The Acton Historical Commission and the Acton Historic District Commission have been successful in preserving many of these resources, and with non-profit organizations such as the Historical Society, in educating people as to their importance. Acton also has a diversity of modern cultural resources through the Town’s libraries, churches, museums, theater and cultural societies, groups, and clubs, as well as the Acton Boxborough Cultural Council.

Summary of Key Points

History

- Native Americans pre-settled the area for hunting, fishing, gathering, and some agriculture – especially around Nagog Pond.
- Concord shepherds settled the area that would become Acton (in 1655) because of its prime grazing lands.
- Mills were developed on Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook as early as 1670 – several mill sites remain.
- In 1735, Acton incorporated as a town and a meeting house was built in Acton Center.
- Railroads came in 1843 with stations in South Acton and West Acton that became village



Acton Voices*

“The historic, New England architecture describes Acton’s character.”

“In addition to the historic architecture, there is a pride and awareness of our local history (e.g. Isaac Davis, Crown Resistance Day, Patriots Day).”

“I want more historic homes protected and preserved.” (according to 69.3% of respondents)

“Preserve rural and historic characteristics,” was identified as the number one priority in six public meetings.”

“Most residents are unaware of our history; they are here for the schools and will not stay.”

“I would like a community center, more restaurants, cultural activities and a movie theater.”

“If I could do one thing to make Acton a better place to live I would get us a movie theater!”

“There is not enough variety in activities, places to go, entertainment for all.”

“If I could do one thing to make Acton a better place to live I would create more centers for congregating.”

Approximately one-fifth (19.8%) of Acton’s residents reported that history and historic architecture were among Acton’s three most important assets.

When asked if they would like to see more cultural activities in Acton, almost 40% (39.4%) of respondents to a mail survey reported wanting more theater, art exhibits, concerts, etc. in Town.”

** public input from Phase I of the planning process*

centers; a branch line connected South Acton with Marlborough in the 1850s, and by the 1870s another rail line went through East Acton and North Acton.

- By 1900, the population in the 5 villages was 2,120, and apples were the major export.
- In 1925 Acton population was large enough to sustain its own high school.
- The Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory lists Conant Farm, Grassy Pond, Miller Farm/Station Master's House, Nagog Pond, Nashoba Brook, Rt. 2 Gateway Agricultural Fields, South Acton Village, Stonefield/Simeone Farm, and Wetherbee Street Woods as significant cultural landscapes.
- Historic stone walls contribute greatly to the Town's character.

Cultural Resources

- Acton boasts a culturally diverse population.
- Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council and Acton Recreation Department list a variety of cultural events – ethnic, musical, film festivals, theatre, arts & crafts, storytelling, and dance.
- Theatre III and the Open Door Theater are

non-profits dedicated to promoting the performing arts through education and high-quality, reasonably-priced performances.

- The Acton Recreation Department hosts a long schedule of events, most at NARA Park, throughout the year.
- Acton Memorial Library hosts an active schedule of events and community meetings including storytelling, book discussions, historic site explorations, musical events, movies, English language conversation groups, art exhibits, computer training, etc.
- Several of Acton's churches and a number of businesses host cultural events.

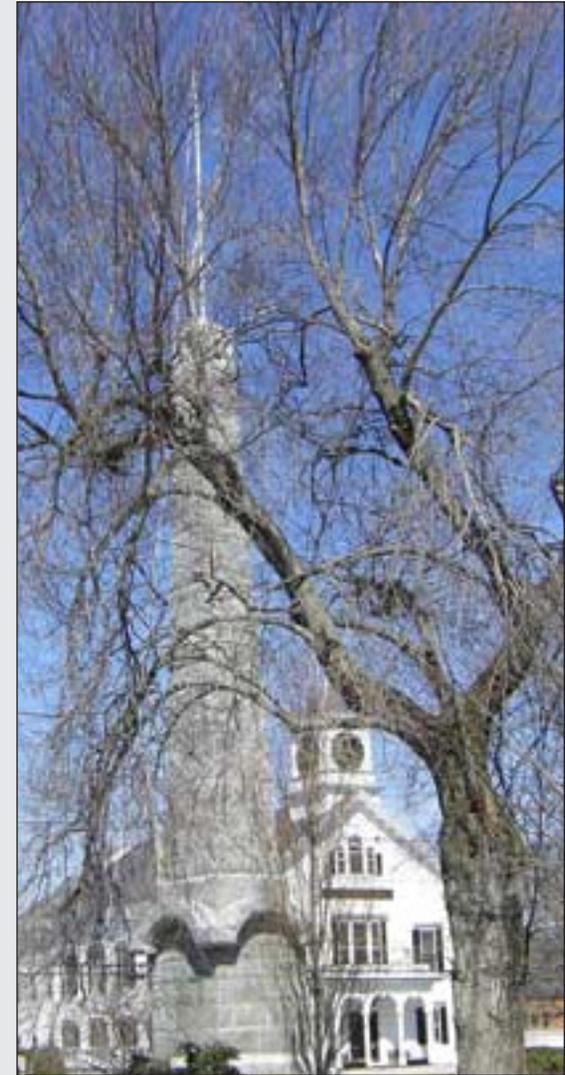


Opportunities and Challenges Posed by Existing Historic and Cultural Resources Conditions

- Efforts to update the inventory of historic resources are continuing.
- Farms that were central to Acton's history are slowly disappearing or are threatened.
- Acton retains many historic barns, reflecting the Town's agricultural past. They represent an opportunity for reuses that would help preserve character. Current measures to ensure their long term protection and productive use may not be adequate.
- Acton's many stonewalls that contribute to the Town's character are often threatened by new development.
- Traffic through the villages has increased and is a threat to the safety of pedestrians and detracts from the appeal of the villages.
- Some development along Massachusetts Avenue, Route 2A/119, and elsewhere does not complement the historic character of Acton.
- Acton's design requirements within the existing zoning regulations (for commercial development) do not always achieve the

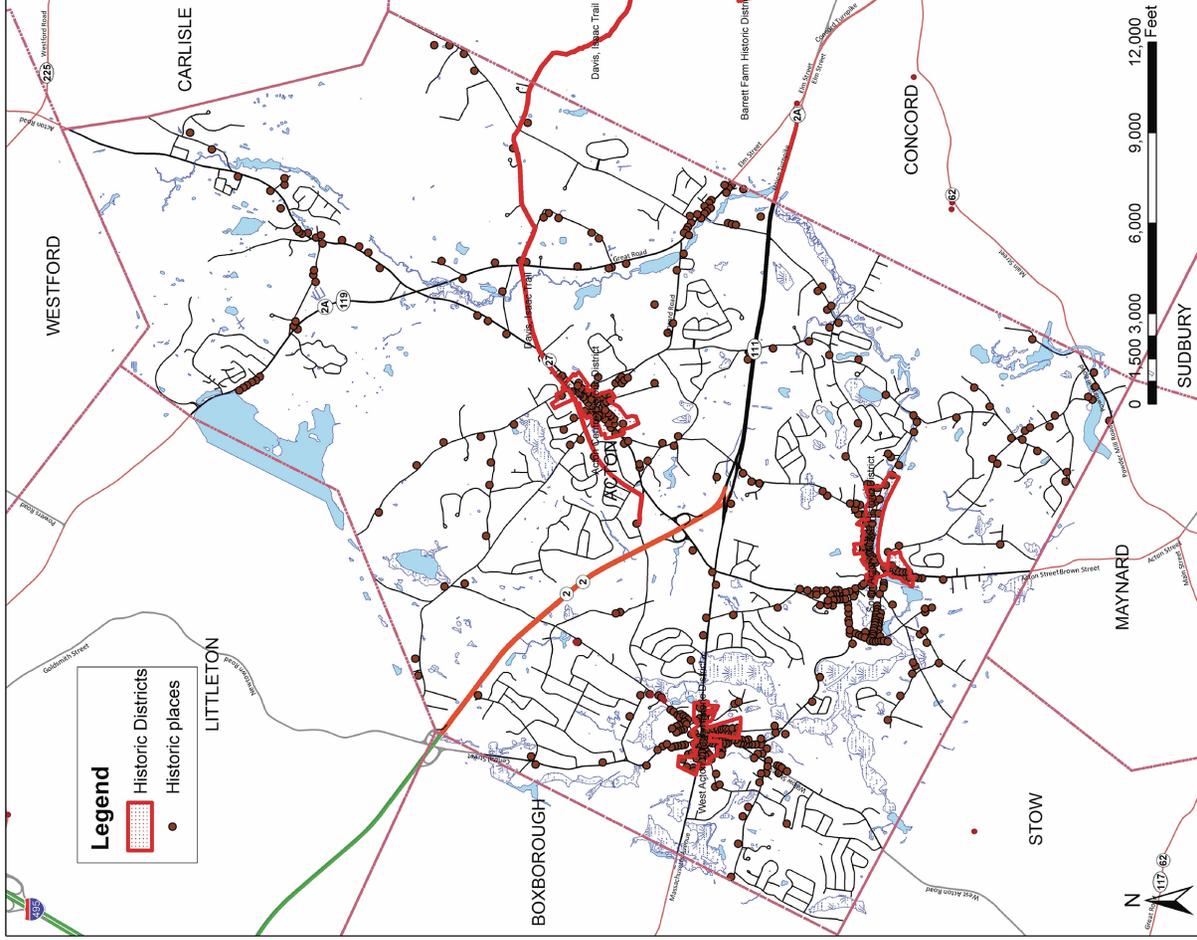
look and feel desired.

- Public utilities can sometimes overwhelm the character of the villages.
- The Town has not developed a strategy for managing technological developments (such as cell towers) and ensuring these developments are implemented in a way consistent with and harmonious with the rural character of the Town.
- Acton has a number of sites of archaeological interest and many have not been researched, documented, and protected from destruction from land development.
- There has been ongoing discussion of expanding the historic districts to include more of the historic resources and revising the design guidelines.
- Much of the historic path of the Line of March (Isaac Davis Trail) is not protected.
- **In conclusion**, historic and cultural resources are strengths of the Town and an important ingredient in creating its unique character and supporting diversity. Ongoing effort is needed to preserve the past and to provide opportunities for cultural involvement by all.



Historic and Cultural Resources

Figure 4.6: Historic Resources



The Map of Historic Resources shows the Existing Local Historic Districts, the Isaac Davis Trail, National Register Properties outside the districts and the historic places listed in the Acton Historical Commission's and Massachusetts Cultural Resources inventory lists.

