

Acton 2020



PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON HOUSING

Saturday, March 12th

2:00-4:30pm

Acton Town Hall, Room 204

PURPOSE: *To hold a public workshop with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of housing by inviting resource people and the public to discuss some of the key issues important to Acton's future. Also to further understand the variety of viewpoints and people's concerns regarding this issue.*

AGENDA

- 2:00 – 2:30 Welcome and Introduction (including PowerPoint presentation)
- 2:30 – 3:30 Discussion of Hypothetical Scenario
- 3:30 – 4:15 Small Group Discussions including mapping and prioritization exercises
- 4:15 – 4:30 Reconvene as Large Group
Next Steps

This public workshop is part of a three-part series.

If you were unable to attend the other two, please let us know if you have any “burning thoughts” regarding the other “burning issues.”

Eat, work, shop: What’s good business for Acton?

Thursday, March 3rd/ 7:00-9:30pm/ Acton Town Hall

Do Actonians want to live in a more self-contained community, with enough of our own retail establishments and industry to reduce the need to drive to employment, entertainment, recreation, and shopping venues? Or do we prefer to let other towns host the businesses we patronize and

instead emphasize the more rural and/or bedroom-community characteristics of the town? If economic development is pursued, what kind should be encouraged and where should it be located? We need your input as we assess and prioritize economic development in Acton.

Your Comments:

How can we love cars and hate traffic?: Getting around Acton

Wednesday, March 9th/ 7:00-9:30pm/ Acton Town Hall

“I got stuck in traffic.” We all hear it, perhaps with increasing frequency. Acton has several key traffic pinch points that cause frustration for all. What can the town do to help alleviate car congestion? And what about those who are unable to drive? Are Actonians willing to use more public transportation if it were offered? Are there enough people

clustered in the right places to make a public transportation system viable? Will investment in bike paths and sidewalks help alleviate traffic? Or are the costs of such undertakings really worth the benefit? Come help us evaluate how we can get around town better.

Your Comments:

Other Burning Issues?

Are there any other “burning issues” you feel are important to address in Acton’s future?

Your Comments:

HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO

After hearing about the success of Avalon in Acton, a developer comes to town proposing Avalanche Hill, a large multiple unit housing development which by providing rental units brings Acton to its 10% affordable housing target¹.

The complex will sit on an entirely wooded 50-acre site with 390 rental units in seven 5 story apartment buildings and six townhouse 2 story clusters with 8 units each. There is some space set aside for common uses including a main lobby, administrative office, child care center, and clubhouse and fitness center. The site of 50 acres yields a little under 7.8 units per acre and provides space for buffer and landscaped areas, other green areas, roads and walkways, parking and wastewater disposal. Relevant dimensions of a rental housing development to bring the total affordable units in Acton up to 10%.

- A 50 acre site (that would have to be rezoned, and/or receive a special permit, and/or come in under 40B)
- 390 one and two bedroom housing units in seven five-story apartment buildings and six two-story attached townhouse buildings.
- The apartments' average size will be 1,000 sq. ft. and the town houses will be 1,400 sq. ft.
- Total project population is estimated at 975 (2.5 people/housing unit)

PROJECTED HYPOTHETICAL IMPACTS

VITAL STATISTICS: Hypothetical Housing Development of 50 Acres	
Total buildings footprint	124,900 sq. ft.
Total floor area in buildings	496,900 sq. ft.
Floor area ratio ²	.23
Sq. ft. of total site land area per housing unit	5,585
Land cost	\$15,000,000 @ \$300,000/acre
Construction cost for apartment building	\$67,200,000 @ \$160/sq. ft.
Construction cost for townhouses	\$10,800,000 @ \$150/sq. ft.
Parking, landscaping, roadway and other ancillary facility costs (including clubhouse, pool and wastewater disposal system), plus contingency	\$25,000,000
Total project cost	\$118,000,000
Annual property taxes	\$2,133,440 @ \$18.08 tax rate
Traffic generated	between 3,000 and 3,500 trips/day
Water demand	73,125 gal./day
Septic demand	68,000 gal./day

¹ If a city or town has less than 10% of its housing defined as affordable according to state standards, developers can override local zoning to place housing where ever they want, with the condition that they must make 20% of the units affordable. Affordability is defined as housing for households with incomes not exceeding 80% of the metropolitan area median household income and requires such housing to restrict rents or home prices for a specific period of time, generally in perpetuity. These households are designated as low and moderate income and the current affordable price range for them is \$140,000 to \$170,000

² The ratio between sq. ft. in a building (counting all floors) and the sq. ft. in the lot containing the building

VITAL STATISTICS: Hypothetical Housing Development of 50 Acres <i>Cont'd</i>	
Storm water	78,000 gal. for every inch that falls (on the buildings); parking and landscaping and roadways assumed to be permeable
School children generated	121 @ .31/household (a norm from the National Multi-Housing Council)
Cost of educating school children generated	\$1,452,000 @ \$12,000/student ³

Fiscal Effect. The residents of the new housing units will place pressure on the school system, demand for potable water, public safety and add significant traffic to the streets.

Impact on School System. Due to the projected increase in the number of children estimated to live in Avalanche Hill, Acton schools are making plans to accommodate an increase in class sizes and adding a lunch shift because the cafeterias will not be able to seat all the children; this will result in the first lunch shift starting at 10:30 am (and in children returning home starving at 3:00 in the afternoon).

Impact on Town's Visual Character. The seven apartment buildings will be about 50 – 55 feet high, keeping them under the height of tall trees. As many of the on-site trees as possible will be kept to maintain the wooded character of the area. The project will be kept back from its public road direct access point to provide a planting screening. However, the architecture in the renderings is not in any way compatible or reflective of Acton's character.

Environmental Impact. The project will be located within walking distance (1/4 mile) of an elementary school and some shops thereby providing residents with an opportunity to reduce their driving. Additionally, the development will seek LEED® certification and in doing so will use as much of the stormwater on site as possible for irrigation and for the on-site package treatment plant for wastewater treatment. The rest will be discharged underground. Unfortunately, all this disruption of the ecosystem may impact the habitat of the blue-spotted salamander.

Impact on Social Fabric. Providing a variety of housing types supports the ability of people in different stages in the life cycle as well as different socio-economic levels to live in Acton.

Impact on Town's Future Policy and Ability to Address Affordable Housing. The development will significantly add to the ability of several portions of the town's population to live/continue living in Acton and will provide temporary immunity to 40Bs, "breathing room" and a chance to develop a pro-active strategy to keep Acton ahead of the 10% threshold in the future.

³ This is an average cost between the Acton School District and the Acton-Boxborough School District. The fiscal impact study done around 2000 used marginal costs and showed much less impact.

SMALL GROUP EXERCISE (45 minutes)

Brief Introduction and description of small group exercises

You will be asked a couple of questions, next you will be invited to participate in a mapping exercise and finally you will be asked to prioritize action steps.

Questions

1. Based on those you know, who do you think would like to live in Acton/stay in Acton but may have a hard time doing so (e.g., seniors, low and moderate income, town staff, teachers, fire fighters, children who grew up in Acton)?
2. What would you say are the characteristics of the kind of housing these people would like/meet their needs?
 - Physical form (small, single family, apartment)
 - Location (access to public transportation, access to personal services)
 - Price point (“affordable⁴”, market)
3. Does this kind of housing exist in Acton? If yes, is there enough of it? Is it located well?

Mapping

USE MAP - Indicate locations of existing large housing complexes on map.

Please use color-coded Legos to indicate desired locations for:

Single-family attached

Single-family detached (e.g., townhouses)

Multi-family complex

Apartment building (e.g., garden apartments)

Mixed Use (e.g., housing over retail)

Other?

Prioritizing Action Steps

If you could do one thing to address housing issues in Acton, what would it be?

PRIORITIZE WITH DOTS: After all participants have added their thoughts to the list, give each participant 5 dots. They may not use more than 3 on any one item.

NOTE: Be sure you have a copy of the ***Housing Highlights*** handout. It may have information useful to you in the discussion.

⁴ Define what you mean