

“Wild Cards” for Evaluation of the Alternatives

The evaluation of the Acton 2020 alternatives will be a combination of quantitative estimates (such as effect on build-out) and qualitative ratings regarding how each alternative satisfies each of the Goals and Objectives. However, there are other, somewhat unlikely factors to consider which deserve consideration; these might be called “wild cards.” Examples are listed below.

Factor	Potential Effect
Substantial increase in fuel costs (e.g., \$10/gal gasoline; could include a carbon tax)	Increase demand for village housing and local transit service Increased cost of shuttle transit Increased energy costs for public buildings
Removal or reduction of home mortgage interest deduction	Slower housing growth Potential shift in demand to smaller, less expensive units
Substantial variance from current population and housing growth estimates, resulting in greater school enrollments	Need to reconsider adequacy of existing school space. Need to reconsider impacts of housing of various types Consideration of some limitations on building permits
Substantially greater or smaller household size than projected.	Greater: more demand for larger units; increased school enrollments Smaller: more demand for smaller units
Prolonged economic downturn	Need to rethink economic development strategies
Inability to increase the regulatory limit on water withdrawals by Acton Water District	Need for some limitations on building permits.
Etc.	

It will not be possible to assess the probability of any of these wild card factors, but a qualitative “what if?” analysis would be worthwhile. In addition, it would be possible to do “trigger planning” in which the development of any of these situations would trigger a policy change, e.g., restricting building permits or increasing transit service.