



## **PRELIMINARY DRAFT: “CHOOSE YOUR ACTON” ALTERNATIVES**

### **NOTES**

- **Elements Common to All Alternatives** See Revised Goals and Objectives and Preliminary Strategies for some preliminary thoughts regarding strategies that would apply for all three alternatives, that is, there are some strategies that will be constant (ways to address the goals and objectives). The remaining aspects can be addressed in a number of ways illustrated by the alternatives. This is where the discussion will focus as these are the aspects that require making distinct choices regarding the general direction the Town would like to select.
- **Evaluation** Alternatives will be evaluated using the goals and objectives as an evaluation tool. The evaluations will be quantitative or qualitative as applicable to the goal/objective.
- **Later Composite Alternatives** It is possible that a finally selected alternative will be a composite of several of the three described here. Desirable elements from each can be combined to form a final selected plan.
- **Shared Assumptions** All three alternatives have some common underlying assumptions, such as continued declining household size and continued regional and sub-regional economic and population growth, continued household income growth, continued reliance on the automobile as the primary means of transportation and maintenance of Acton as a retail subcenter (But there will be a qualitative consideration about how “wild cards” such as variances from these assumptions would affect the outlook.)
- The following descriptions include key features that characterize the alternative and samples of its potential actions and positive and negative impacts



**DRAFT**  
**ALTERNATIVE 1:**  
**Do Nothing Different**  
**(Stay the Present Course)**

## Key Features

- Cluster residential development
  - Over 600 acres of open space have been preserved to date with use of the OSD and PCRC zoning provisions
  - Based on current ratio (859 housing units/ 605 acres preserved), future predicted open space preserved through OSD/PCRC would be \_\_\_\_\_.
- Seek ongoing funding for the town shuttle at current level of service
- Continue extending sidewalks at current rate of construction
- Continue to provide affordable housing in an incremental scattered site manner
- Based on assumptions about the rate of residential development, buildout would occur sometime between 2040 and 2050 with a total of 10,200<sup>1</sup> units.

## [Sample] Potential Actions

- Continued use of PCRC and OSD as the preferred method for residential development
- Continued implementation of the Village zoning provisions
- Continued use of Community Preservation Act funds for qualified projects including historic preservation, affordable housing, and open space preservation
- Continued emphasis on small scale economic development including business recruitment and job retention
- Continued conventional and open space retention subdivision review and approval
- Continued development of affordable housing by the Town and 40B developers

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<sup>1</sup> Estimate from To Live in Acton; it will be updated as part of the analysis of this alternative.

## **ALTERNATIVE 1: Do Nothing Different, continued**

### **Potential Actions, continued**

- Continued management of wastewater and stormwater by the Health Department with input from the Water Resource Advisory Committee
- Limited extension of sewer lines and/or creation of new package wastewater treatment systems.
- Continued use of groundwater protection district zoning to protect water supply
- Continued management of water supply and encouragement of conservation by the Acton Water District
- Continued application of sign regulations
- Continued use of design review
- Other changes to improve the zoning bylaw to implement current policies
- Continued management and incremental improvement of municipal facilities and schools
- Consideration of new community center and/or senior center
- Consideration of new North Acton Fire Station
- Sustainability efforts within the scope of existing land use and natural resource policies, such as encouragement of ride-sharing, home energy conservation improvements, and recycling.

### **[Sample] Positive Impacts**

- No new legislation or administrative support required.
- Town retains its existing spread-out “leafy” character
- Continues past practices of good planning and development regulation
- Etc.

### **[Sample] Negative Impacts**

- Traffic will become more of a problem than now.
- Town remains susceptible to 40B projects.
- Fiscal implications of current housing trends on school enrollments and resulting budgets
- Etc.



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**ALTERNATIVE 2:**  
**Limit Growth**

## **Key Features**

- Limit the pace of residential growth while promoting specific kinds of commercial growth
- Limit actual growth (as opposed to its spatial distribution in the village-oriented alternative)
- Focus on redevelopment Great Road for retail and restaurant development
- Develop large employment-oriented commercial complex along Rt. 2 (e.g. high tech/ R&D offices)
- One or two “Avalon-type” developments to meet the 10% affordable level to opt out of 40B susceptibility, preferably with “friendly” 40B actions

## **[Sample] Potential Actions**

- Consider building permit limitations/ tie to infrastructure (e.g. sewer/ water).
- Consider impact fees on residential development.
- Accelerate purchase priority open space parcels
- Down zoning/reduce residential development intensity on developable land
- Hire an Economic Development Officer
- Extend sidewalks along Great Road
- Traffic calming at key intersections along Great Road

## **ALTERNATIVE 2: Limit Growth**

### **[Sample] Positive Impacts**

- Better assurance of not requiring new school expansion with resulting fiscal burden
- Commercial development will increase Town revenue which in turn could facilitate open space protection and reduced tax rate (or more services)
- Retention of key open space parcels
- Limited growth in traffic
- Later and potentially lower residential build-out.

### **[Sample] Negative Impacts**

- Possible challenges to growth limiting measures such as capping annual building permits and transferring development rights.
- More stringent vigilance (and staffing) required in reviewing development proposals and administering environmental protection measures.



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**ALTERNATIVE 3:**  
**Guide Growth to Villages**

### **Key Features**

- Limit and guide growth geographically through infill and redevelopment of existing village centers and potential village centers (e.g., Kelley's Corner)
- Expand village boundaries
- Decide on growth priorities (decide which village(s) to focus on first)
- Make transportation investments such as sidewalks and traffic calming in and around the villages
- Encourage affordable housing on small, scattered sites
- Develop opportunities for recreation near village centers
- Preserve and develop small vest pocket parks and tot lots in villages
- Develop Kelley's Corner into more of a village and as a transportation hub (for example a "pulse" type minibuss shuttle)

### **[Sample] Potential Actions**

- Create village overlay districts so that each village has its own distinct identity
- Use transfer of development rights (TDR) to direct new housing to villages and away from open land
- Expanded transportation investments:
  - Fixed-route shuttle with stops at the villages
  - Expand sidewalks and bike lanes/paths going in and out of villages
  - Develop path system independent of streets
  - Traffic management/calming more intensely in villages (e.g. speed tables at pedestrian crossings)
- Hire an Economic Development Officer

## **ALTERNATIVE 3: Guide Growth to Villages**

### **[Sample] Positive Impacts**

- Development in villages will increase Town revenue which in turn could facilitate open space protection
- More opportunities for public gathering, communications and walking will be provided.
- More opportunities to create architecture in villages consistent with existing historic character.

### **[Sample] Negative Impacts**

- Possible increased traffic congestion, traffic safety and parking issues in the villages.
- Potentially sooner and higher level of residential buildout (because incentive may be needed to transfer development rights)
- Town revenues may not be as great as they might be because smaller residential units will replace larger ones with higher assessed value. This may be offset by fewer school children being produced in smaller village residential units.