

Strategy	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timing/Priority
GOAL 1: Preserve and Enhance Town Character			
Objective 1.1: Manage growth pro-actively.			
Develop and implement a comprehensive site and design review process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further refine Acton’s <i>Design Guidelines for Commercial Development</i>¹ and extend the guidelines to include multifamily and village center residential and mixed-use development.² 	Planning, Design Review Board, PIBd, BoS, ACHC	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ways to strengthen the design review process while reserving permit authority with the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen as applicable, and implement improvements.³ 	Planning, Design Review Board, HDC, PIBd, BoS	Highest 
Review and revise the Town’s bylaws and planning process to support the 2020 Plan goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research further use of by-laws beyond those already in place (e.g. transfer of development rights, impact fees, etc.) (See also Objective 2.4) 	Planning	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all current zoning and its build-out potential to insure that zoning supports the goals articulated in the master plan. Aim to simplify the zoning code to insure clarity of intent and to support the regulatory review process. 	Planning	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage continued regional cooperation; consider creating more formal structures for collaborating with neighboring towns to address common issues (including 40B developments, open space protection, etc.) 	Planning	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address 40B restrictions on Acton’s planning and zoning authority. 	See Objective 5.2	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support legislation that would increase the Town’s control over how and where affordable housing is constructed. 	BoS	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add a full-time position to the Planning Department to assist with plans for villages and key centers, development review, and economic development.⁴ (See also Objective 7.2) <p style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">Additional Staff \$</p>	Town Manager, BoS, Finance, FinComm, Planning	Highest

Acton 2020 Recommended Implementation Program

Working Draft

Strategy	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timing/Priority
Objective 1.2: Preserve and enhance village centers.			
Enhance Village Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete a <i>Village Centers Plan</i> that includes the recognized villages and Kelley’s Corner.⁵ Review the existing <i>Village Plans</i> and develop a priority strategy for implementation of key components so that the centers’ full potential as villages are realized. Determine which villages should receive more concentrated growth. 	Planning, 2020 Committee, TAC	Highest Key first step
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and enact zoning to guide growth through infill and redevelopment in and around existing centers in support of the <i>Village Centers Plans</i>. Specify minimum performance standards and density incentives for meeting additional specified criteria, including Transfer of Development Rights from areas the Town wishes to preserve. Include both buildings and landscape. (See end note for more specifics on achieving vitality, attractiveness, and walkability.)⁶ (See also Objectives 2.4 and 6.1) 	Writing zoning: Planning, PIBd, BoS Application and development review: Planning, PIBd, BoS,	Highest (Needed to fulfill the preceding action)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As part of the Village Centers Plan update the <i>Sidewalk Design Guidelines</i> to include village-specific design guidelines. 	Sidewalk Committee, Design Review Board	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage developer contributions of land and/or construction of public realm improvements in Kelley’s Corner and village centers, e.g., small-scale “vest-pocket” parks and playgrounds.⁷ (See also Objectives 4.2 and 4.3) 	Planning, BoS (or other designated special permit authority), Design Review Board	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the development of an organization to revitalize Kelley’s Corner such as business association that could in time become a Business Improvement District or Community Betterment Association. 	2020 Comm, EDO, Businesses	Highest

Acton 2020 Recommended Implementation Program

Working Draft

Strategy	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timing/Priority
Improve Kelley’s Corner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Kelley’s Corner (KC) into a mixed use town center and transportation hub. Prepare a design study of Kelley’s Corner.⁸ 	Planning, Health, Engineering, PIBd, BoS, TAC, AHC, HDC	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrate Town investments such as sidewalks, landscape and streetscape improvements and traffic calming in Kelley’s Corner to make it more pedestrian-friendly and to serve as a gateway.⁹ Capital Investment \$ 	Planning, Health, Engineering, PIBd, TAC, BoS, FinComm, BoS, AHC, HDC	Highest
Improve West Acton Village Center while preserving its historic character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider designating West Acton Village (WAV) as a “key center” to which some growth is guided¹⁰. Prepare a design study of the village¹¹ 	Planning, Health, Engineering, PIBd, BoS, TAC, AHC, HDC	2 nd Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrate Town investments such as sidewalks, landscape and streetscape improvements, traffic calming, and wastewater treatment facilities in and around the village.¹² (See also Objectives 2.1 and 6.3) Capital Investment \$ 	Planning, Health, Engineering, PIBd, BoS, FinComm, TAC, AHC, HDC	2 nd Highest
Objective 1.3: Preserve rural characteristics and open space.			
Document the rural characteristics that should be preserved. Develop a mechanism for prioritizing those elements which contribute to an appreciation for Acton’s history and the pleasure of living here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider expanding Acton’s <i>Scenic Roads Bylaw</i> to protect stone walls, mature trees, and other landscape features to other locations that have been identified as needing protection¹³. 	Natural Resources, AHC, Planning	♥
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the further exploration/implementation of recommendations from the 2006 <i>Freedom’s Way Landscape Inventory</i>.¹⁴ (See also Objectives 1.1 and 1.2) 	Natural Resources, AHC	

Acton 2020 Recommended Implementation Program

Working Draft

Strategy	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timing/Priority
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that new sidewalks conform with <i>Acton’s Sidewalk Design Guidelines</i> whenever possible. Choice of layout, materials, landscaping should be in keeping with the nature of the area.¹⁵⁾ 	See Objective 3.1	
Protect open space. (See also Objectives 2.4 and 6.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the implementation of the <i>Open Space and Recreation Plan</i> (OSRP) including its proactive strategy to anticipate and respond to open space in terms of protection and acquisition of parcels, as well as water resource protection.¹⁶ (See also Objective 4.2) 	Natural Resources, Open Space Committee, ConsComm	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use zoning to protect open space parcels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue the existing practice of encouraging the use of cluster zoning for most residential development outside the centers ○ Provide incentives for transfer of development away from open land to desired growth centers.¹⁷ (See also Objectives 1.1 and 1.2) 	Planning, PIBd	Highest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider multiple ways to fund the acquisition of desirable open space parcels so the Town is in a position to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use tax income from economic development ○ Consider higher Community Preservation Act assessments and continue to use Community Preservation funds for purchase of high priority sites ○ Borrow funds for major purchases ○ Research other fund opportunities ○ Consider “purchase and develop part” strategies as a way of funding open space purchases <u>Capital Investment \$</u> 	Planning, Natural Resources, CPC, BoS, Finance, FinComm	Highest

Acton 2020 Recommended Implementation Program

Working Draft

Strategy	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timing/Priority
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize other regulatory tools and incentives to protect open space. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actively support agriculture ○ Provide tax incentives to protect open space ○ Promote community gardens, country fairs and farmer’s markets ○ Purchase agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs), with money coming from the Community Preservation Act funds, Transfer of Development Rights, and other sources. 	Planning, Natural Resources, BoS, FinComm	2 nd Highest
Objective 1.4: Preserve historic buildings and landscapes.			
Develop preservation priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to define historic characteristics (buildings, views, landscapes, etc.) and work with relevant committees to actively preserve these.¹⁸ 	AHC, HDC, Planning	Highest
Preserve historically significant buildings, landscapes and other historic features.	Coordinate Historic District Commission review with development of design guidelines and BoS special permit review of development in historic village centers. Consider giving HDC jurisdiction to review color choices.(See also Objectives 1.1 and 1.5)	BoS, HDC, DRB, Planning	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct outreach to private historical property owners from the Town or preservationists to help with funding and encourage preservation.¹⁹ 	AHC, HDC, Planning	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand and use Acton’s Scenic Roads Bylaw to protect landscape features 	See Objective 1.3	
Objective 1.5: Foster an understanding and appreciation for what makes Acton unique, including its history.			
Promote an active interest in the past on the part of residents and visitors alike.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invest in tourist support infrastructure for certain key sites and publicize town features (historic site, nature trails, etc). <u>Capital Investment</u>. 	AHC, EDO, BoS, FinComm, EDC	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve town entrances / gateways to be welcoming and reflect Acton’s historic heritage. (See also Objective 1.2) 	AHC, Planning, Engineering, Municipal Properties, Econ Dev Officer (new position),	2 nd Highest

Acton 2020 Recommended Implementation Program

Working Draft

Strategy	Action Steps	Responsibility	Timing/Priority
		EDC	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to support historic celebrations and efforts to increase awareness of Acton’s historic past (e.g. events, plaques, Historic Marker program, school curriculum). 	AHC, schools	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand the telling of Acton’s history to include a wider time period and events including Native American history as well as European history of the town, (for example, the ‘Trail Through Time’ in North Acton). 	AHC, ABCC	

Blue type indicates a reference to a strategy/action described under another objective.

¹ See current at <http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=343>

² Add incentives dependent on preserving character and compatibility with historic resources. Make guidelines specific to targeted growth centers and other areas of town to make residential and commercial development consistent with other 2020 Plan goals. Single and two-family residential would not be included in design review.

³ This may include providing decision-making authority to the reviewing board in certain cases (the Design Review Board is an advisory board currently). For special permits, expand and standardize the information required from developers, e.g., fiscal and traffic impacts of proposed development.

⁴ This position would also include the Economic Development Officer duties described in Objective 7.2.

⁵ The Village Centers Plan should consider all potential village centers as part of a system of centers. The plan should define the desired character for each village and prepare development and design guidelines. It should consider elements and qualities that contribute to the success of traditional villages throughout New England.

⁶ Examples of achieving vitality, attractiveness, and walkability include:

- **Encourage** activity by promoting a variety of uses at different times of day and night, such as grocery store, a variety of businesses, family restaurant, places for programmed events, pubs, movie house, etc.
- **Support** walkability in the centers by providing sidewalks along the street and well-lit and landscaped pathways to buildings and within parking lots. Provide parking on street and in combined lots behind buildings
- **Encourage** unique and fun window-shopping
- **Support** locally owned shops; develop “buy local” campaign
- Identify, seek, and support anchor with “pulling power”
- Provide more on-street parking to support businesses and help slow down traffic.
- Plant flowers and trees to enhance village streets and contribute to traffic mitigation

- **Encourage** our ethnic communities to contribute vitality through cultural events, celebration, food, etc.
-

⁷ Priority should be given to parcels identified in the Acton OSRP.

⁸ Based on this study:

- Delineate areas that should receive development, infill, and redevelopment.
- Determine desired density and type of use for these areas, e.g., wide range of shops and restaurants.
- Prepare KC-specific design guidelines.
- Create list of criteria to apply as incentives during special permit development review, e.g., provision by developers of outdoor seating; separating seating areas from sidewalk with plants, low fence, etc.
- Consider Kelley's Corner gateway opportunities, i.e., what the design of this area should communicate to visitors and citizens as they drive into town.

⁹ Such investments include sidewalks, benches, signage, landscaping, etc.); **encourage** the provision of outdoor seating; separate seating areas from sidewalk with plants, low fence, etc.

¹⁰ Use this planning process to ensure we understand what makes West Acton currently a successful village so that efforts to enhance it don't threaten what contributes to its village identity and livability.

¹¹ Based on this study:

- Decide whether to guide growth to WAV.
- Delineate areas that should receive development, infill, and redevelopment.
- Prepare WAV-specific design guidelines.
- Create a list of criteria to apply as incentives during special permit development review.

¹² Sewer extension and package wastewater treatment plants are options to consider.

¹³ Acton's Scenic Roads Bylaw regulates the removal of stone walls and trees within the right of way for 33 roads. Using this prioritization as a starting point, **consider** other locations where stone walls provide an important reminder of Acton's historical development and land use or contribute to our appreciation of the landscape.

¹⁴ The Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory is a 32 page report prepared in June 2006 by Acton citizens in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Freedom Way Heritage Association. The report includes many recommendations related to preserving rural character.

¹⁵ See Guidelines for Acton Sidewalk Design at <http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=856>

¹⁶ The OSRP is being updated in 2011. Based on the OSRP, define primary purpose of protecting open space and develop criteria for prioritizing parcels (e.g. conservation, views, active recreation, protection of water resources, etc); create a short list of open space protection priorities and stay focused on that list. Ensure broad public understanding regarding which open space is not protected and to what degree protected space is indeed protected.

¹⁷ Transfer of development rights can preserve the entire open parcel; cluster zoning usually preserves just over half of the parcel.

¹⁸ Incorporate appropriate recommendations from 2006 *Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory* and refer to *Mass Historic Commission Survey Forms* Consider desirability of expanding current historic districts to include older historic homes and historically significant structures (as listed in the *Cultural Resources List*)

¹⁹ HDC is developing a revolving loan/grant program, potentially funded in part by CPA funds, modeled after the Town's revolving loan fund for septic system improvements.