

Acton Community Outreach Kick off Meeting: 15 January 2008

The following is a compilation of the responses of those present at the Master Plan's Community Outreach "kick off" Meeting on the 15th of January 2008. Participants were asked to list their most favorite and least favorite aspects of the Town of Acton. The following is a list of their responses. The numbers in parentheses () represent the number of people with the same response. The total number of participants was approximately twenty (one joined in later, a couple had to leave early).

What are some of your favorite things about Acton?

Comments defining sense of community/community character:

"A particular stretch of Acton reminds me of what I like...Concord Road...it's a wooded road, and it includes a variety of things that have special rural character...you can go walk at Morrison Farm, go down to the Ice Pond, and then there's the soccer field, rail trail, and there's also shopping at the end of the road. On that same stretch, there's the incredibly quaint chapel and a wooded park. All of this in a very small area."

The landscape: natural and agricultural (8-10)

- People come here for the trees, the shades, picnics
- a wooded road, including a variety of things that have special rural character...
- "I like the trees"
- Apple orchard – symbol of countryside close to civilization
- Agricultural farms and horse farms
- Conservation lands
- Aesthetics, enjoyment of nature and health benefits

Retention of historic, rural, and small-town character (8-10)

- A lot of people are really invested in preserving the small town aspects
- Old world charm.
- Apple orchard – symbol of countryside close to civilization
- Architecturally historic character – especially like the "quirky buildings" which contribute to an "incomparable character"
- Historic homes and agricultural farms and horse farms
- W. Acton Village – its scale and mixture of uses
- Aesthetics, enjoyment of nature and health benefits

Favorite Things (continued)

Sense of History (8-10)

- Revolution
- Historic Buildings
- “The hope of the new world reflected in the layout”
- Historic homes and agricultural farms and horse farms
- the story of Isaac Davis, symbolism of small community making large contribution to the Revolution
- Acton residents were fifers

People/Sense of Community...Welcoming community (5-8)

- “Openness of community to newcomers allows the community to renew itself, enlivens the community” ; welcoming and friendly
- Sense of community, people come together to solve problems
- “When I first moved here.... The schools... and now it’s all about the people.”
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Small town, near a city (3-5)

- Suburban, but still retains rural character and qualities
- Small town feeling with big town amenities including diversity of people and availability of goods and services
- The Town is on the cusp between a small town and a suburb; a lot of people are really invested in preserving the small town aspects
- Community diverse and balanced
- Old World charm and caring but not in other people’s business (“Yankee respect for privacy”), but things are changing: :”
- Apple orchard – symbol of countryside close to civilization
- Maintaining its small town character while being close to a city

A varied environment (6)

- open land, parks, recreation, shopping
- “A particular stretch of Acton reminds me of what I like: Morrison Farm, Ice House Pond, soccer field, rail trail, shopping, chapel and cemetery which is also a park all within a very small area.”
- wide range of neighborhoods
- “For its size the town has a remarkably wide range of architecture, housing types, activities and commercial uses.”

Diversity of population (5):

- Groups of people, mixture of demographics
- Small town feeling with big town amenities including diversity of people and availability of goods and services
- Community diverse and balanced

Schools (4)

Volunteerism (2-3)

- Willingness to volunteer with passion.
- Open Town Meeting

Wide Range of things to do (2)

Discovery Museum: education for 1.5 years old through high school age, complements what schools do for residents as well as visitors to town

What are some of your least favorite things about Acton?

Traffic, especially in terms of congestion, speed and safety (6)

Transportation related (4)

- Can't walk/bike safely everywhere, resulting in isolation
- Lack of adequate parking in all of the villages
- Lack of public transportation and too much dependence on cars (2)
- "Can't turn left in most places in town" (due to traffic congestion)

Kelly's Corner (2)

- ("is an eyesore", it demonstrates why people are driving and not walking, problems are exacerbated by its adjacency to the School Campus")

40 B development (2)

- "Town allows them to be built outside of land use and architectural context (e.g. River Street)."

Need for connection to the outside world, especially for children growing up here (2)

Too homogeneous (population)

Too many activities for kids (competes with church)

Isolated from a range of diversity (people and things to do)

Newcomers (especially from Cambridge, Newton and Brookline) want to "citify" ; "we need to develop to a level that is comfortable."

Too small tax base, lack of diversification in commercial uses, lack of range of restaurants, shops and employment opportunities

Lack of walking shopping districts (e.g. as exist in Maynard and Concord)

Overrides (need to budget better)

Lack of a community athletic center

Lack of early (elementary school) foreign language instruction

Lack of school orchestra or strings education

- it used to be about the trees, the shade and the picnics.... Now it is more about the commerce and shopping... why do people feel they should have everything nearby...? If they want to have everything nearby, go back to the city.