

# Survey of Acton Businesses

Taken March, April and May, 2008  
2<sup>nd</sup> Draft: Feb. 19, 2009

## 1. Introduction

As part of the Acton Comprehensive Plan Outreach efforts, a survey of businesses, their attitudes, values and opinions about the future of Acton, was conducted in March, April and May, 2008. All town businesses were sent a mail-out/mail-back postage-paid survey form in April. In March the survey form was posted on a website, encouraging Acton business people to fill it out electronically. 11 returns were obtained electronically. Of the 1,622 survey forms mailed out 75 were mailed back (or in case of a few, brought back to Town Hall). The combined total of 86 returns (website and mail-back) represents a 5.3% return rate. Publicity was done via newspapers, notices and meeting announcements to help increase the return rate. The original deadline for mailing back returns was extended from April 11<sup>th</sup> into May to encourage more returns.

The survey was developed through a process of determining topics for questioning from public and committee meetings, then preparing a draft for review by a subcommittee of the entire outreach project. Five redrafts of the survey were prepared through review by the subcommittee resulting in a final one-page survey for sending out and posting on the web site. This form was printed on one side of a legal size sheet of heavy paper that could be folded, taped shut, and mailed out and mailed back with postage paid in both directions. The survey was addressed to each business in Acton, and sorted by 21 mail routes for delivery at a bulk-rate by the U. S. Postal Service. It was an anonymous survey because a rip-off label was used with instructions to remove it before sending the survey form back.

The survey is comprised of 14 multi-part questions, which contain a mixture of multiple-choice responses and open-ended comment type responses. Thirty-five separate items of information were asked for in the survey. A question about the type of business being operated as asked to allow checking with data annually reported by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development on business type, that allows comparison of survey results with the town as a whole (to determine how representative the survey is). There was a conscious attempt not to duplicate questions asked in the town's recent Open Space and Recreation Survey, and not to duplicate questions asked in an earlier survey done to help make decisions about a Senior Center, and finally, not to duplicate information in the Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report for Acton. Some of the same questions included in the parallel Resident Survey, done as part of this outreach effort for community comprehensive planning were asked, to if there were differences in attitudes between the business community and town residents.

Two lists of businesses were obtained and combined in an extensive editing process which eliminated duplicate listings. One list was obtained from Claritas, a company that is specialized in assembling socio-economic data bases. This list of 1,206 businesses was based on listings

from telephone companies for all businesses that had Acton addresses and business telephones. A second list was obtained from the Acton Town Clerk of all businesses that register names in Acton. These include home businesses and other businesses that do not have business phones. This list consisted of 995 names, addresses and phone numbers. From these two lists the final list of 1,622 unduplicated businesses was prepared and used for mailing. As mentioned, 86 returns were received.

Eighty-six returns are associated with an error rate of +/- 11.4%. This means the percent result reported for each item may vary by as much as +/- 11.4% if 1,476 answers were given. Because in most cases not all respondents answered all questions, fewer than 1,476 responses were received for many questions. It is therefore advisable to think in terms of a 12 or 13% error rate, which is acceptable for a survey of this type. Very many of the answers given varied from each other by more than 24-26% (12 to 13% error for two items being compared), indicating that the survey gives a significant and accurate accounting of how two items are valued. It is important to point out that the survey results do not meet the test of randomness, which is a requirement for an absolute accounting when inferring that results of a survey represent the results that would be obtained if all the businesses in Acton had responded. It is likely that a self-selection process occurred which resulted in most returns being sent in by those most interested in Acton and its government. This is similar to the conditions that surround our local, state and national elections where only a limited number of voters turn out to vote.

Randomness is defined as each member of a group being surveyed (businesses in the Town of Acton) having an equal chance to be selected to provide a return. This test was met in the Phone Survey of residents described in another report. In that survey some of the same topics as those in the Business Mail-Out Survey were covered, giving a chance to better determine public opinion.

The table below show how the businesses types reported in the Business Survey match those reported by the state in its annual compilation of establishments wages and employment for Acton. Townwide 2007 data is used which is the most recent year reported by the state.

**Survey % Distribution by Business Types Compared with the Town as a Whole**

	Automotive	Retail	Wholesale	Restaurant	Entertainment	Prof. Serv.	Pers. Serv.		
Surveyed %	0.0	24.6	5.8	7.2	1.4	30.4	4.3		
Acton %	4.9	10.7	6.0	5.1	2.4	34.0	6.9		
	Health Services	Lodging	Manufact.	Transport.	Construction	Education	Communic.	Other	
Surveyed %	10.1	0.0	4.3	0.0	2.9	4.3	1.4	2.9	
Acton %	7.9	0.0	5.1	1.2	8.2	2.5	3.0	2.1	

Source for Acton Data is the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

The surveyed data are all within 6% of the Acton Town-wide data with the exception of retail, where the difference is 15.9%. With the exception of retail businesses the survey data appears to have been returned from an accurate accounting of businesses by type

The survey questions are contained on the following pages, and the results of the survey from both the web site and mail-back returns are given on pages following that. The physical format of the survey was altered to meet the needs of both the mail-out and website applications, but the questions and the language are as shown on the following pages.

## 2. ACTON BUSINESS SURVEY

## Comprehensive Community Plan, Outreach

The Town would like to hear from you about how you would like Acton to further evolve over the next 5 to 10 years. We want to know the features, services and characteristics of the Town you value and would like to preserve and enhance. This survey is designed to help town officials better understand how business owners and managers feel about Acton and its future. We encourage you to take this opportunity to inform us how the Town can improve its services and general conditions for businesses. Please return this survey to the Planning Office in the Town Hall at 472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720 by April 11, or take the survey online at <http://www.ActonOutreach.com>. Thank you. This business survey is intended to supplement, not duplicate, information in the resident goals and objectives survey now being conducted for the Town Comprehensive Community Plan. **There will be no identification of individual businesses or people in the survey.** Data will be tabulated and aggregated and used for Town management and development of an updated Comprehensive Community Plan.

1. How satisfied are you with your dealings with the Town and services of the Town? Please circle one.

	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	No Opinion	Unsatisfied	Highly Unsatisfied
The permitting process (excluding signs)	1	2	3	4	5
Sign permits	1	2	3	4	5
Provide information you need	1	2	3	4	5
Police Department services	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Department services	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic control facilities and services	1	2	3	4	5
Town bylaws (zoning, health, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Value received for your tax dollars	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5
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2. What can the Town do to improve business conditions? (Open ended question)

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3. What would you identify as being assets to Acton (qualities you appreciate)?

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4. What would you identify as being challenges to Acton (qualities you do not like)?

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5. What makes Acton unique?

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6. What type of business activity do you operate in Acton? Please circle one Automotive Sales and Services Retail Wholesale Restaurant Entertainment Professional Service Personal Service Health Service Lodging Manufacturing Transportation Construction Education Communications  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you satisfied with your current location? Please circle one Yes No No Opinion

8. Are you satisfied with your current building and premises? Yes No No Opinion

9. Are you satisfied with your current parking and access conditions? Yes No No Opinion

10. Do you reach adequate markets for your business activities? Yes No No Opinion

11. Are you able to find the type of employees you need? Yes No Somewhat

12. Are you satisfied with the current business mix in Acton? Yes No No Opinion

13. Do you have plans for business expansion in Acton in the next few years? Yes No Possibly

14. Are you interested in using "green" construction techniques in your future improvements? (For example, solar energy and/or water saving fixtures) Yes No Possibly

15. Would you be interested in more and increased connections and cooperation between existing businesses (e.g. contributing to a joint fund for aesthetic improvements and/or increased services in commercial areas)? Yes No Possibly

16. Do you participate in any local business organizations? Yes No

17. If yes, which ones? MetroWest Chamber of Commerce Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Rotary Club Other: \_\_\_\_\_

18. How long has your business been in Acton? 1 – 5 Years 6 – 10 Years 11 – 20 Years 21+ Years

19. How much do you feel your business is a part of the Acton community? Very Much Some-what Very Little Not at All

20. How should Acton evolve in the future?

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21. How does your business contribute to the community? (e.g., team or other sponsorships, scholarship programs, award programs, providing space for public announcements, fund raising drives)

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22. What would help to make your business feel more a part of Acton?

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Results of the combined website and mail-out survey returns are shown on the following pages. First the summarized result for each multiple-choice question is shown with the absolute number of responses and percentages each choice represents of all responses. Then the results of the open-ended questions are shown with a tally of number of times key words were mentioned. Then a complete listing of all the verbal open-ended responses is included.

### 3. Results of Multiple-Choice Questions

<u>Question:</u>													
<u>How satisfied with Town and services?</u>	<u>Highly Satisfied</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Unsatisfied</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Highly Unsatisfied</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Did Not Answer</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>
Permitting process (excluding signs)?	10	11.6	26	30.2	33	38.4	12	14.0	2	2.3	3	3.5	86
Sign permits?	3	3.5	16	18.6	36	41.9	13	15.1	14	16.3	4	4.7	86
Provide information you need?	17	19.8	38	44.2	19	22.1	3	3.5	2	2.3	7	8.1	86
Police?	35	40.7	34	39.5	10	11.6	2	2.3	1	1.2	4	4.7	86
Fire?	42	48.8	26	30.2	12	14.0	2	2.3	1	1.2	3	3.5	86
Traffic control?	21	24.4	26	30.2	21	24.4	11	12.8	3	3.5	4	4.7	86
Town bylaws (zoning, health, etc.)?	6	7.0	30	34.9	24	28.0	15	17.4	8	9.3	3	3.5	86
Value received for tax dollars?	4	4.7	28	32.6	18	20.9	15	17.4	13	15.1	8	10.3	86

<u>Question</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Possibly</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Did Not Answer</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>
Satisfied with current location?	73	84.9	3	3.5	5	5.8					5	5.8	86
Satisfied with current building and premises?	62	72.1	14	16.3	4	4.7					6	7.0	86
Satisfied with current parking and access?	50	58.1	22	25.6	14	16.3					0	0	86
Reach adequate markets for your business?	58	67.4	11	12.8	11	12.8					6	7.0	86
Find type of employees you need?	42	48.8	14	16.3	16	18.6					14	16.3	86
Satisfied with current business mix in Acton?	56	65.1	15	17.4			8	9.3			7	8.1	86
Plans for expansion in next few years?	17	19.8	51	59.3					12	14.0	6	7.0	86
Would use "green" construction techniques?	46	53.5	9	10.5					22	25.6	9	10.5	86
More connections and cooperation between businesses?	20	23.3	29	33.7					28	32.6	9	10.5	86
Participate in local business organizations?	20	23.3	51	59.3							15	17.4	86

<u>How long have you been in business in Acton?</u>	<u>1-5 years</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>6-10 yrs.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>21+ years</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Did Not Answer</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>
	24	27.9	17	19.8	14	16.3	24	27.9	7	8.1	86

<u>How much do you feel your business is a part of Acton?</u>	<u>Very Much</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Very Little</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Did Not Answer</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>
	30	34.9	22	25.6	11	12.8	9	10.5	14	16.3	86

<u>To which business organizations do you belong?</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Metrowest Chamber of Commerce	8	40.0
Middlesex Chamber of Commerce	4	20.0
Rotary Club	2	10.0
Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce	1	5.0
Other*	5	25.0
Total	20	100.0

\*Other business organizations that got one mention each are:  
 AV Chamber of Commerce  
 Acton Lions  
 West Acton Business Associates  
 Woman's Business Network (Based in Harvard)  
 Acton Family Network

<u>Other types of businesses listed in addition to those identified in the list of types of businesses on page 2.</u>		
Food - Pizzas	Security	High tech equipment
Horse farm	Massage Therapy	Consultant
Travel	Real Estate	Network/Computer Services
Funeral Service	Consulting	Photography
Child Sport Facility	Dental	Consulting
Finance	Self employed, consulting, arts	
Consulting at Raytheon, BAE Systems etc.	Horse farm / breeding/lessons/training/boarding	

#### 4. Frequency of Mentions in Open-Ended Questions

49 Answered  
37 Did Not Answer

58 Answered  
28 Did Not Answer

59 Answered  
27 Did Not Answer

<b>How to improve business conditions in Acton?</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>What are Acton's assets?</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>What are Acton's challenges?</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
1. Traffic	9	1. Schools	18	1. Traffic	19
2. Signs	6	2. Town Character	10	2. Taxes	8
3. Taxes	4	3. Open Character	9	3. Parking	4
4. Permitting	3	4. Location/Access	6	3. Growth	4
4. Zoning	3	5. Community	4	5. Development	4
4. Sidewalks	3	6. Rail	3	6. Housing	4
7. Trash	2	6. Police	3	7. Condos	2
7. Sewer	2	8. Fire	2	8. Transportation	2
		8. Restaurants	2		
		8. Diversity	2		

34 Answered  
52 Did Not Answer

47 Answered  
39 Did Not Answer

30 Answered  
56 Did Not Answer

<b>How should Acton evolve in the future?</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>How does your business contribute to Acton?</b>	<b>Mentions</b>	<b>How can your business be made to feel more a part of Acton?</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
1. Development	6	1. Sponsor	16	1. Business	10
2. Business	5	2. Schools	10	2. Town/Acton	5
3. Walk	3	3. Contribute/Donate	7	3. Signs	2
3. Community	3	3. Fund	7	3. Traffic	2
3. Residential	3	4. Teams	3	3. Improve	2
		5. Charities	2		

**5. Combined Mail-Out and Website Business Survey Unsummarized Results for Open-Ended Questions (A complete listing of written responses)**

*49 Answered*

*37 Did Not Answer*

<b>Question: What can the Town do to improve business conditions?</b>
Include businesses in events and notices. Acton Day is really just the Recreation Dept; could be so much more.
Easier permit process
Keep it concentrated in congested areas; don't allow more sprawl. Promote horse farms in all areas of town.
Curb trash pickup, curb manure removal, electricity and postal service still come from Concord - must change!
Better, more permissive signage
Lower taxes and fees. Enforce rules more consistently
Lower property taxes
Lower property taxes, drive out a particular class of people and shrinking business diversity
Be more business friendly and stop looking at merchants as "the enemy"
More flexibility on sign allowances (within reasonable guidelines), allow for expansion for an office over existing garage - zoning changes about 5 years ago was unaware
Think "How will this decision being made hurt small business?" when making future decisions
Site plans should be by planning, no need for local Board of Health, conservation regulations, key intersections should be improved or signalized
Less full time FD and PD, more detectives versus patrol on PD. Were robbed years ago - no one was caught. Why don't large fire engines have ambulances? No good use of fire equipment?
Town to give permits to all businesses to put in their signs by the road, all the same kind
Larger signs allowed
Allow better sign for Acton Woods Plaza
Eliminate conflicts and interest with licensing for town approval services
Make is easier to open a business in town. Do not make outside business jump through hoops
Better permit process
Open up more commercial zoning
Reduce traffic congestion, turning lanes needed (not traffic lights)
Cut taxes
Traffic signs needed, i.e.. Intersection Newtown Rd & Rt 27, need walk path
Stop strip malls, reduce traffic
Would like to see local police more involved with traffic safety and businesses, improved road signs

Continue improvements to bike path and side walks
Better walkability @ Kelly's Corner
Support business. We offer services to citizens to help creator a more green environment. We can work together
Farmers Market, arts center, less duplication of businesses (banks, gas stations), more unique shops
Manage/control property tax rate increases
Add sidewalks Rt 2A to PO Square Rd, continue sidewalks to Rt 2, both sides, add public sewer system
Fix traffic congestion
Allow for larger signs
Better traffic signals and side walks
Allow nice signs on street
Improve transportation - walking, shuttle, interconnect paths
More traffic lights at difficult intersections
Loosen limit in one zoning, eliminate historic district Commission. Town too residentially oriented, business not appreciated/wanted
Continue directory of services
Sewerage and trash pickup
Bigger, noticeable sign in the street with lights at night
Sidewalks to make it safer for customers
Eliminate Concord Rotary, attract more high tech/service business to increase weekday population of town
Acton reasonably hospitable to capably-run businesses, maintain unified tax rate for competitive edge on area's towns, maintenance or improvement of traffic mobility
Pave pot hole, let up on historical signage restrictions and work with building dept
Acton Woods Plaza does not have a sign listing businesses. People drive by and do not know that we are here.
Have less strict signing laws. Have public sewage system for Route 2A.
Provide adequate parking for all businesses. Improve sidewalk access to businesses
For everyone, another traffic light on 2A and on 27.
offer more town services, sewer and water
Keep the taxes level with residences, we do not use the town services like the residents do. The landlords pass on the increased taxes to the residents in the form of products pricing and in some cases are forced to leave town because of profits or lack of.
The town should allow small business owners to display A-Frame signs on weekends and even on certain weekdays particularly in the evening in order to make motorists aware of the existence and special events occurring at these businesses.
Improve the intersection of 111 and 27. Bicycle lanes. More pedestrian crossings. General improvement of Rte. 2A.

As my business is small and internet-based, I am not well qualified to comment
Make the zoning and other bylaws more conducive to development and businesses locating in town.

<b>Question: What would you identify as being assets to Acton?</b>
<i>58 Answered      28 Did Not Answer</i>
The People: Highly educated, value local, diverse
Growing city
Police and fire department are very good and efficient.
Semi-rural elements.
Schools, clean streets, not overdeveloped
Affluent customer base
Open land, open feel to the town
Conservation Land, diverse business community
None
Exceptional community spirit and support
Amount of forest/wooded space
High school, elementary school Campus, Historic Center
Nothing until something is done to the size of Great Road. Needs to be widened and improved
Police and fire department
School system, shopping malls, library
The Police Dept
West Acton "village" feeling, open space, green spaces, trails, good schools, educated, good income, population
Schools, great use of green space
It would be good if the Rail trail were finished
Nice place to live
Location, schools, commercial area
Low crime and other high tech businesses
Small town feeling but progressive
Stronger sense of identify and preservation of heritage
Safe, convenient, organized, well-run
Suburban, farm
Access to train/shopping
Good school, safe environment
Green space, school system
Great community, nice people, good school systems
School system, intelligence of population
Mix of people and businesses
Stong community values, charm, history

Arboretum, Nara Park, ABHS Theatre Productions, Trader Joe's, COA (non-business venues)
Proximity to 128/495
Small size, minimal traffic
Good town services
Town events - Acton Day, Winter Fest, Wellren Univ.
Demographics
Schools
Schools and wide demographics (ages, ethnicities)
Location
Open space, cleanliness of town
Public works dept, hazardous waste days, transfer station operation, surveys that continue to be made without results
Safe community, good library, friendly staff, Board of Health
School system
Schools, small town feel
Educational system, concentrating apartments & businesses on Rt 2A corridor
Close to highways, variety of restaurants
Excellent school system, great town workers, location, demographics, proposed rail trail
More cohesive and unified body of residents than in other town, debate and decision processes are largely productive
Small town, upper class population
Conservation land, services for seniors, good schools, nice range of businesses and restaurants, history.
Proximity to highways, pleasant environment (not overdeveloped) Good Town services.
Conservation lands, NARA, School system, future rail trail, children's museum
Very well diversified and safe.
Diversity of environments (business, residential/old, new)
Schools; close to Concord and Lincoln
Response Text
School system; The Discovery Museums, Nara Park, and Recreation Department offerings
town it self
Schools which help keep our town real estate market strong. The shopping conveniences, especially as I like to and do shop locally. The variety of stores is good.
Small Town Environment, Good Schools, Train Station, Diversity
The diversity of the community. The interaction between the town government and the citizens.
historic nature, conservation lands, opportunities for tourism
Quality of schools, lack of crime, great library, Commuter rail station
Schools, mixed-character (rural, residential, village, commercial) of development

**Question: What would you identify as being challenges to Acton?**

59 Answered 27 Did Not Answer

Rapid growth, yet traffic problems don't seem to be addressed on Rt. 27 (Intersection of 111).

No comments

Increased traffic

Mountain trails in Conservation Land in much better condition!

Traffic, esp. Rt. 2 and Rt. 2A

Uncontrolled growth, especially residential

Over development, especially cheap looking condos, i.e.. River St, Main St near K-Mart etc

Over development, taxes too high

Promoting new business, tax incentives to add employment opportunities

No cooperation with local merchants w/ bad checks, people in collection office unable to rectify their own mistakes

Allowing business to grow while still maintaining the character of the town. Cemetery dept should be able to keep more funds rather than channel to general fund

Over regulation of business, i.e. parking & signage. Very poor road and pedestrian conditions

Improving streetscape by planting shade trees within or outside row on Arterial Streets

Traffic, lack of consistency in ? Decisions, i.e.. Retail. More sidewalks on main roads connecting center of town Rt. 27 to 2A and along 2A going west to the Littleton line

Update Great Road

Terrible traffic

Not pro-business in sign by-laws

Traffic, lack of Rail Trail

Entrances to shopping centers (Roche Bros)

Uncontrolled development of arteries - not attractive, poor traffic control

Permitting

Traffic on 2A/119

Traffic, taxes

Traffic issues - Nashoba Rd (between Newtown & Great Rd), Concord Rotary, corner of 27 and Mass Ave during school bus departure

There should be bottle/can return at landfill that pays a nickel per item

Traffic on Rte 27, 2A

Parking availability for retail areas (i.e. West Acton)

No more shopping center, no more housing

High taxes

Parking and commuter rail station

Too congested with day traffic, too many strip malls

Hard to find living arrangements within budget (houses, not apartments)

Intolerance & arrogance

Traffic

Kelly's Corner, too many multi-unit housing projects, lack of charm/design

Parking at commuter station, lack of public transportation, few sidewalks, no service to/from airport shuttles, potholes
Growth, traffic control
Poor public water quality (yellow color)
Traffic congestion, low employee quality and quantity
High taxes
Schools and demographics
Lowering taxes for home owners
Rt. 2A, the rotary in Concord
Transportation - poor connectivity
Need more service businesses (restaurant, grocery store)
Mounting taxes, obstructing action/inaction of Historic District Commission
High taxes (real estate)
Congestion/traffic, over building, costs over runs
Sewerage and trash pickup
No central shopping district
Concord Rotary, Sewage system for the entire town
Ability to maintain sense of cohesive community in face of growth, info overload & cultural diversity. Growth without loss of mobility
Small town, historical board, understaffed/overworked building dept.
Cost of housing/property taxes
Traffic (route 2A business area) control, 40B development, taxing middle income owners out of town.
Traffic
Traffic, Lack of economic and racial diversity
Many businesses (studios, restaurants, retail shops) open for a short time and then close due to lack of success.
Don't need any more condos or houses
No Community Center, or multi-purpose room available for rental. Traffic issues.
keeping the small town feel, no more building!!!!
Traffic especially weekends, too many 40 B projects are changing the character of town, and the buyers are not there for this many condos.. smaller houses clustered would be better..
Speed control on Route 2, Crosswalks for Pedestrians, Foot Traffic (No sidewalks), Lack of Public Transportation to & from the T Station.
Managing growth. Acton seems to be growing in leaps and bounds and being able to maintain a high level of town services and security is the biggest challenge I think.
bad taste in architectural building, strip malls, loss of town character, erosion of a dignified appreciation of high art and culturally rich environment, lack of "real" art...focus on still life and crafts
Relatively high property taxes, somewhat limited railway station parking
People tend to be overly cautious when proposals are made to enable additional development and growth in town.

**Question: What makes Acton unique?***48 Answered**38 Did Not Answer*

Our customers value local business, yet the Town's not showing interest in working with businesses. Signing is a big problem.

Diversity

Everything

Great schools

Way too high property taxes - lower them!

It is obsessively self-conscious

Open Conservation Land, Location near important highways

Location near major highway, Conservation Land

Accessibility off major routes

Same as #3

Proximity to Boston in combination with rural feel

Not much, becoming less unique

Its small town rapid growth dilemma

People in Acton

Not yet overgrown

Location - access to Boston & Worcester & Nashua NH

Put an entrance on 111

Balance of "country" feeling, close to Boston

Closeness to Cambridge/Boston

Neighborhoods are spread out

Country charm with suburban conveniences

Acton has allowed runaway development in ways surrounding towns have not

History

Location, commuter rail, mix of businesses

Rural setting, convenience to the city, diversity

Nothing. It was 30 years ago

Diverse people, good ethics/involvement

The older areas, history

Mixture of community, town services

Proximity to Boston/Worcester, 128/495

Suburbia ???

Nothing!

High taxes

Too developed

I live here!

Unwavering commitment to residential development and higher spending on education

Combination of good neighborhoods and good shopping and services

Sewerage and trash pickup

Historical sites, education system quality
Country feel
Big town that feels like a small town, no drive thru joints are big plus for Acton and surrounding towns, restrictive sign laws are good to a certain point
Collaboration between town schools, Chamber of Commerce and businesses add element of bonding within town
Small town, everyone knows each other
Good mix of rural streets and neighborhoods.
Diversity, historical areas, easy access to both Boston and Worcester, Good conservation of open spaces.
Neighborhoods
Very good schools and sage and well diversified.
History, pretty Town Center, NARA Park, conservation land, arboretum, WE NEED THE RAIL TRAILS
History
schools
Mixture of newer and older architecture in the homes here, mixed cultural interests and the people
it's not, it just thinks it is -- that is part of the problem
Sense of History, Ethnic Diversity, Great Choice of Schools
Acton's location and its proximity to Boston and major highways. Diverse and multi ethnic population.
culturally: history, business opportunities: educated population, relatively high disposable income
Not sure
Superb schools, proximity to Boston, mixed character of development

<b>Question: How should Acton evolve in the future?</b>
<i>34 Answered      52 Did Not Answer</i>
Preserve open space as much as possible
Add entertainment for young people, movie theatre, move diverse restaurants and a strip joint of class and more support for animal related activities (therapeutic riding) for troubled kids in. More help for seniors.
Be more supportive of local business investment
Slow down developers and preserve green space - there is not much left
Less development, freeze property tax increases
Keep development down to a minimum, cap property taxes
Sponsor student activities annually, donate annually to various local charities, donate parking to Mt Culvary Lutheran
Control commuter traffic through town
More sidewalks so that people can bike and walk 2A & 27 full distance through town both sides. Brian Freeman Rail Trail
More business, less residential to improve tax basis for local residents
Allow drive thus
Less development-dominated
Need to change with the times

Stay the course
Limit development, improve aesthetics, especially Kelly's Corner/Exchange Hill
Continued mix of all businesses
Nicer town scape, booming business, new buildings
Plan "A" look for the town; it is now sprawl
Become more environmentally aware, bring more of its charm back, have building restrictions
Keep its conservation land, provide good affordable housing, better infrastructures
More health fairs
Clean up Kelly's Corner
Become a green community, develop history centers as walk able areas
Doing a good job now - keep doing it
Change anti-business attitude
Better comprehensive planning, avoiding residential over development
Improve access for people who walk on sidewalks
Controlled growth
Our long term aspirations won't necessarily align with collective community's long term goals
Let up on signage rules and work with building dept to ensure signs are approved correctly
Encourage more projects like habitat for humanity, slow the development process.
Conserve more land for future. Stop building too many residential units.
I'd like to see a Community Center here Comm. Ed. Occurs in addition to other events as opposed to scattering throughout town in different buildings.
Stop building condos and houses on every available square inch; Get the RAIL TRAIL ASAP. Get Mass. To put a big train station on Route 2 and 495 intersection with lots of parking.
keep housing growth under control
That is a tough one, slow down growth so we can manage what we have now, with traffic , housing stock and get some of the empty business locations filled again..
It would be nice if Acton evolved into a trendy, stylish and progressive town.
take advantage of its resources, instead of degrading them
Not sure
Be open to additional commercial or mixed-use development that opens opportunities for a greater diversity of housing and retail options.

<b>Question: How does your business contribute to the community?</b>
<i>47 Answered      39 Did Not Answer</i>
School auctions. Donate to Recreation Dept. and Rotary Club. Shared giving at local schools. Food Pantry. Breast cancer organizations.
Sponsorships
Oasis of open space in neighborhood for all to enjoy. Employment and sponsorship for people with disabilities
I would do all of this if you didn't tax me to death!

We give thousands of dollars to local charities and fundraisers. We contribute over \$100,000 in direct taxes to the town and state, as well as collect over \$115,000 in sales taxes, for which we receive no compensation
A unique and necessary service
Provides a needed service
Sponsor & fundraise for preschool, public schools and non-profit organizations
Never asked
Volunteer
Happiness and health
Contributions to Acton Congregational Church in \$ and goods
Education
Sponsorships, community involvement, active member of Middlesex West Chamber
Support of High School activities
Not at all
Local discounts
High tech jobs to engineers/PhDs
We give to many fundraisers
Semi-retired consulting engineer seeking full-time retirement
Donate to various organizations
Sponsorships, food, gifts to school project
Contributions to Fire and Police Depts.
Taxes
Donations (\$, gifts, services, events), participate in community supper
Professional services
Numerous team sponsorships & advertisements in programs & town/school functions
Contribute to most local drives, offer space to school teams, girls scouts etc for fundraising, sponsor Accessports, recycle bulbs, have many "green" products available to Acton citizens
Started social club 7 years ago with over 300 members who bring revenue to entertainment, restaurants and special events
Fundraising drives
Team sponsorships, equipment donation to Police Dept
Sponsorships
Sponsorships and attendances
Scholarships for working families
Employment for youth
Donate to community requests (library, elderly tax relief, etc); I appreciate being asked
Personal and hobby sales and services
Would like to do more
We sponsor town sports
Sponsorships, providing space for public announcements, fundraising drives for theatre groups, school raffles
Monetary support of local charities, ABRHS scholarship to grad. Storage space for local entities at no charge, school-business activities
Sponsorships, donations to local schools and clubs

Not large enough
Sponsorships, Public Health Involvement
Done sponsorships, etc.
Sponsorships to fundraising events.
Donate to schools and hospital
team sponsor, fund raising drive contributions
Donations to MANY local activities, Historical Society, town events, like the Patriots Day trolley has been sponsored by me since it's beginning. Volunteer for MWCOC, Donation to Sarah Lynn Hughes Road race for 10 years. AB Music award for a Senior each year for the last 2 years, and the Music dept. has enough money to give for another 10 years. (this was in memory of one of my dear employees and friend who loved music and the theatre) then the Arboretum first was developed my whole office worked there for a day each year, as part of the United Way( I think) to help make it a lovely place to be part of our community..There are a lot of other things in the 30 years I have had my business in town, too numerous to remember now.
Being a small business, we are restricted in our participation but are open to ideas.
We contribute to the Acton community by providing financial support to many of the events and activities sponsored by the town, schools, places of worship, civic and charitable groups.
Interesting that you focus on financial contributions, I contribute by offering my services for free AND I give to many organizations.
Too early; still in start-up phase

<b>Question: What would help to make your business feel more a part of Acton?</b>
<i>30 Answered      56 Did Not Answer</i>
Provide information for business owners.
Too many power outages
Order more food here than other places.
Give me agricultural status, subsidize youth and summer programs with horses
A more friendly approach from Town Hall
Ask the various town departments to do business locally and stop buying goods and services out of town
Ask "What have we done as a town to hurt your business? How can we remedy this?"
Nothing
Improvements to foot and motor traffic on 2A, slower speed limits
Improve Great Road and allow business to have signs by the road
Better landlord
Our business service is confidential in nature - n/a
Not sure, good question
Nothing
Not sure
N/A
Solve traffic issues, widen Nashoba Rd, replace rotary, spread out school bus departures, create back road access
Don't know
My business not geographically based, semi-retired

Periodic newsletter with info valuable to local business community
Not relevant to this business
Permit new construction that would be profitable. Not possible today by a large margin
I feel part of Acton
We have been here so long that we feel like everyone knows our name
Better profitability to do more of the above
We are very much part of the community
Not make me spend money on different signs because building dept made mistake
Niche too unique
Some sort of small business/home business organization
I would like an office in my home.
limit growth of business
We spend a lot of time and money giving, it would be nice if someone noticed! But my agents and I DO feel a part of town and have had the honor of placing many people in their homes here over the years. 52 in business, and 32yrs total for me as an agent ( I started in 1976) and then the owner starting in 1980..
why would I want that?
The community and the town leadership is doing a great job in making my business feel part of Acton and this survey just added to the good feeling towards Acton.
regular meeting place in the evening
Business is not location-specific being internet (WWW) based.

## Appendix: Statistical Reliability

If all 86 people that returned the business survey answered a given question the error rate for it would be +/- 11.4%. However, very few questions were answered by all the people responding. Typically for any given question, between 70 and 80 people would provide answers. The error rate associated with this level of response varies around +/-12 to 13%. Therefore it is useful to think in terms of an overall error rate of +/-12 to 13% for all the questions. A +/- 12 to 13% error range is within acceptable statistical limits and is commonly used. Some marketing and attitude surveys take small samples of about 70 to 100 observations, yielding error rates of +/-10 to 13%. It means that if survey results for a given question vary by more than +/-12 or 12% the results are conclusive. For example, we observe in the survey that 58.1% of businesses are satisfied with their current parking and access conditions, while 25.0% are not satisfied with their current parking and access conditions. The error rate is within the margin of difference of the two responses, so the survey results are conclusive. The table below shows error rates (rounded to the nearest full percent) for different size surveys.

Survey Sample Size	Margin of Error Percent*
2,000	2
1,500	3
1,000	3
900	3
800	3
700	4
600	4
500	4
400	5
300	6
200	7
100	10
50	14

\*Assumes a 95% level of confidence

Source: Pamela Hunter, "Margin of Error and Confidence Levels Made Simple," iSigmaSix, 2008, Website: <http://www.isixsigma.com/library/content/c040607a.asp#author>