



TARGETED OUTREACH MEETING:
Chinese Language School Comprehensive Community Plan Seminar

On Sunday, February 24, Lauren Rosenzweig, Acton Selectwoman and Daphne Politis from Planner's Collaborative consulting team presented at the Acton Chinese Language School Seminar Series. They described the process and opportunities for involvement in town government in general and in the community planning process more specifically. The presentation was followed by a visioning session conducted with the approximately 10-15 persons in attendance (some had to leave early). Participants were regular members of the Chinese Language School; residency in Acton ranged from 1 – approximately 10 years (with one participant residing in Acton for 38 years). Participants were asked to place a colored dot on a map to indicate where they live; the individuals lived in neighborhoods throughout the town. Discussion was lively; there was a general sense of agreement regarding what most considered the attributes of the Town as well as regarding which issues they felt needed to be addressed in the future.



Participants were asked the following questions:

- *Why did you move to Acton?*
- *What are your favorite things about Acton (and hope to preserve)?*
- *What are your least favorite things about Acton (and wish you could change)?*
- *If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be?*
- *Can you think of other ways in which the Chinese community can be involved?*
- *What are some reasons that might limit your involvement*
- *Can you think of ways the Town can make it easier for you to be involved?*



Why did you move to Acton?

- Schools (12)
- Commuter rail (3)
- Reputation
- Friends living here (2)
- Location convenient to work (8)
- Peaceful setting (2)
- The town welcomes multi-culturalism (2)
- Housing is affordable (5)
- Green – trees, conservation land (3)
- Existence of a good-sized Chinese community

What are your favorite things about Acton (and hope to preserve)?

- School system (2)
- Town open to listening
- Balanced development/growth
- Preserved open land/conservation
- Safe community – walking, biking, kid-safe
- Commuter rail (e.g. “super express” from Acton to Porter Square)
- Good library programs (multi-cultural, story time, child-oriented)
- Park programs
- Chinese school, the fact that the town lets us use the facility, creating a regional center
- Family resources (including library, parks, private indoor sports facilities & after school programs)



What are your least favorite things about Acton (and wish you could change)?

- Parking at commuter rail, especially in the winter is a problem, sometimes have to use non-resident parking and even that fills up (some ideas to address the issue included providing a shuttle bus to the station, encouraging people to walk and bike to the station by improving the sidewalk system which is not continuous, in need of repair and not adequately sized).
- Tap water – not drinkable, has a bad taste and a yellow tinge (high mineral content, needs better filtration, some neighborhoods are worse than others)
- No trash collection (choices are take your garbage to the dump or pay for a private service)
- There is no central Town Center (instead there are smaller village centers such as West/East/South Acton) – would like a central place for all the Town to meet (e.g. summer town fair, eat outside, small stores, control traffic)
- Some small businesses are leaving town (need to attract and keep small businesses in Acton, especially family-oriented services)
- Lack of swimming facilities (would be nice to have an indoor pool e.g. Sudbury, more family time in school pool which now rents out too much time to private organizations)
- NARA park should be free for residents
- Tax-overrides are too many – need for better fiscal planning
- Too much housing development - control the development of housing because of its impact on schools
- People leaving after children are done with school... *“What can we do to keep people here after their school-aged children complete high school?”*
- Taxes too high

If you could do one thing to improve Acton, what would it be?

- Preserve excellence in school system
- Control residential growth (because it adversely impacts class size at the schools)
- Balance growth
- Control density
- Improve parking at the commuter rail (short term goal)
- Keep safe (crime-free)
- Provide transportation options to youth and seniors
- Allow all taxpayers (including non-citizens) to vote on town issues
- Compare tax rate to other comparable communities and understand why different, hopefully reduce



Participants were asked to think about the following questions and get back to us with comments as we ran out of time (the children's language classes were dismissed and parents had to go and retrieve their children).

Can you think of other ways in which the Chinese community can be involved?

Let's talk about reasons that might limit your involvement:

Too busy/not enough time
Not sure exactly what I can do
Not sure how to find
information

Language
Lack of transportation
Not use to the idea
Other: _____

Can you think of ways the Town can make it easier for you to be involved?