



Town of Acton
Comprehensive Community
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TARGETED COMMUNITY OUTREACH: ROTARY CLUB

Fifteen Rotary Club members attended the weekly Rotary Luncheon (held at the Scupperjacks Restaurant in Acton) and participated in a mini-visioning session as part of the outreach process of the Comprehensive Community Plan.



Participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves. Approximately half of the members present live or have lived in Acton and operate a business here. The other half conduct their business in Acton, but live out of town. Occupations included: CPA, consulting product safety engineer, attorney, Acton Police Chief, real estate/vending business, marketing services, paralegal, chemical sales, restaurateur, real estate, hotel sales manager, electrical engineer manager, retired police officer/author, and an owner of a clothing store.

The following is a summary of participants' responses to a number of questions.

***Why did you decide to conduct your business in Acton? How was it easy?
How was it hard?***

- Family connections
- Moved to town for the school system
- Five minute commute from my home
- Open spaces are being cultivated
- Senior services are being developed
- It is more lucrative to do business in MA than in NH (where he was before)
- A good quality of life

Notes by Daphne Politis



What could town do to make it easier/better for new businesses? What could the town do to support existing businesses?

- The taxes are driving me out
- My house is too big
- The permitting process is too difficult
- Growth control policies of the Town are good, attracting the kind of people that support our businesses
- Licensing (especially Board of Health) – very difficult
- Signage regulations (especially Historic District) – too strict
- Lack of parking is an obstacle to the growth of businesses (as patrons cannot park) – especially in South Acton.
- Traffic safety is a serious obstacle to attracting customers
- Since people move here for the schools, they need to support the overrides as these support the school system which in turn preserve the real estate values.
- The fact that “visual pollution” is controlled is a good thing (e.g. no billboards, neon, etc.) – but it is a balancing act.

The Town is interested in attracting a diversity of businesses, and would very much like to fill current vacancies. These do not do benefit anyone.

What can the Town do to attract new businesses to fill vacancies? How can the Town best market Acton?

No ideas offered.

What do you think would complement the existing business mix, what’s missing that could ultimately attract more people to your businesses as well?

- There seems to be an anti-brand name attitude in town (most seemed to feel this was good, preserving a level, a quality of businesses, some disagreed thinking that the Town was excluding some possibilities as a result).
- It was noted that Home Depot was chased out of town – participant simply observed fact -- not sure whether this is a good thing or a bad thing
- Have to travel forty minutes for large shops (department stores, Linens & Things, Best Buy, Home Depot)



One of the difficulties of being a small business in a town is competing with the area malls. It seems that towns that have been able to compete best with the malls are those that try to make shopping an experience, that make their town into a place, not just a row of shops.

Do you have any ideas about what kind of improvements could be made in order to improve both the aesthetics and the functioning of commercial areas in Acton?

- Figure out what to do with the traffic.
- Where are the sidewalks?
- Review model such as the Gateway area of Salt Lake City with an “outdoor mall” that revitalized that part of the city
- Kelley’s Corner has much potential
- Some merit to the past suggestion of closing off Rt. 111 to cars and making it pedestrians only.
- Meineke Building, built second story without permit—Town should have made him tear it down - - now it is an eyesore
- There needs to be quality control and oversight of the town budget and operations as well as those of the schools to ensure efficiency and effectiveness
- Need for a 10-story parking garage at the train station. People would come to park there to use the train and then find there is more to do in Acton.
- Roche Brothers parking lot re-design is a disaster.

9.. Do you think that having a shuttle bus take people around town would help your businesses?

Most seemed to support this idea

10. Do you have any creative ideas about how these improvements could be funded?

Unfortunately there was no time for this question.