

## *Acton Visioning Notes*

June 16, 2008

Four participants attended.

### **Preserving Rural Character**

Town should acquire more open space?      Yes 4 No 0

### **Other means to preserve open land**

- 40B is not a good way – too dense and the land that is set aside for open space is not good land
- Should modify development controls to set aside upland open space
- Change zoning
- Gifts of land
- Conservation restrictions
- Preserve roadside trees
- Protect farms, using federal tax benefits – Estabrook example

### **Ways to preserve rural character**

- Agricultural commission
- Right-to-farm bylaw
- Publicize active farms
- Farmers markets
- Access to conservation land, e.g., across Rte 2 and Rte 2A
  - Wetherbee area
  - Linear paths and bike trails
- Preserve historic landscapes
  - Wright Holden farmhouse
- Community garden plots, as at Morrison Farm
- Conservation restrictions, as at Flagg Hill Farm in Boxboro

## **Enhancing Neighborhoods**

### **Ideal Neighborhood**

- Easily walkable
- Shops you can walk to
  - Groceries, etc.
- Closed-in feel, e.g. Heritage Rd, Patriots Hill, Minuteman Rd., Indian Village
  - Lack of through traffic
- Neighborhood “spark plugs” to welcome newcomers, organize neighborhood events
- “Nosey Book” with information about people in the neighborhood – street listing, database of people
- A way to send information to a list of neighbors
- Regular annual events – barbeque, etc.
  - Town should encourage, provide tables, close streets for events
- Encourage neighborhood associations
- Encourage age mix in neighborhood
- Sidewalks, ability to walk safely to auto repair, mall, grocery store,
  - Informal outdoor gathering places
- Improve mobility for seniors who walk but have some difficulty
  - Require sidewalks to be cleared of snow
- Benches for outdoor eating – encourage businesses to provide
  - Recent zoning changes encourage outdoor seating
- Rail trail provides access, connections, safe crossing of busy streets
  - Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail could raise funds for benches along the way
- East Acton Village green – recent event with steel band

## Enhancing Village Centers

### Ideal Village Center

- Like West Acton
  - Grid street pattern
  - On-street parking
  - Sidewalks
  - Historic buildings
  - Street lights
  - Safe for pedestrians to cross
  - Unique, fun window shopping
  - Things people want to buy, e.g., neighborhood pharmacy
- Avoid uses that deaden the sidewalk, e.g. bank with blind windows
- Maintain variety of locally owned shops
- “Buy local” campaign
- Kelly’s Corner has the potential but need incentives to make it happen there
  - Why did McDonalds close?
- Village needs “anchor” with “pulling power”
  - Could be civic use
- Employers that create a lunchtime crowd
- Restaurant/bar, e.g. Not Your Average Joe’s
- West Concord example - 5 and 10, bead store, kids shoes, 2<sup>nd</sup> hand stores
- Contribution of ethnic communities to village life and food

## Challenges

After discussion of the potential challenges Acton faces and potential ways to address them, each participant was given five sticky dots and asked to vote by placing up to three of the dots on the flip chart next to the items they consider the most important challenges.

Votes	Challenge	Ways of addressing
0	High cost of living	
7	Lack of walking facilities	Rail trail (multi-modal – walk, bike, stroller, etc.); accessibility and maintenance
3	Traffic (especially on Saturday)	Slow down traffic Rail trail and access to activity centers that become destinations
2	Need for growth management and site and design controls	Stricter design controls, incl. landscaping
5	Rapid loss of open space	Rail trail Protecting right of ways
2	Lack of destinations/activity centers	Rail trail access
1	Lack of affordable housing	

## Planning for Sustainability

Important for town's future? 4 yes, 0 no

Take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? 4yes, 0 no

As in the section on challenges, ways to plan for sustainability were discussed and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are most important.

Types of action	Votes
• Increase recycling	4
• More walking/biking facilities	5
• Green buildings/retrofitting public buildings (LEED certification)	1
• Incentives for residential and a business energy efficiency	3
• Life cycle cost analysis (incl energy costs)	5
• Re-think how town staff works and commutes	0
• Create "Green team"	0
• Eliminate idling vehicles	0
• Establish town energy committee	1
• Organize carpooling (web based)	1

## Senior Center

### How can it be improved?

- Transportation to it
- More parking with accessible spaces
- More space, e.g., exercise room, multi-uses
- More staff and activities, resources to support

Expand existing facility? 3 yes, 0 no

Combine with community center? 3 yes, 0 no

- Let the seniors decide about this
- Avoids waste of underutilized space
- Shared community use of the existing senior center

## **Prioritizing**

As in the previous sections, potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Preserving rural character	5
Enhancing neighborhoods	0
Enhancing village centers	2
Addressing high cost of living	0
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	2
Addressing traffic issues	2
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	2
Planning for sustainability	1
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	0
Activities for teens	1