

# Town of Aceton Comprehensive Plan Update



Aceton Corner

June 2005

Prepared by the Aceton Comprehensive  
Plan Committee  
With assistance from the Southern Maine  
Regional Planning Commission

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Pages	Introduction
Chapter I	I - 1 to I - 8	Economic and Demographic Changes
Chapter II	II - 1 to II - 6	Housing
Chapter III	III – 1 to III – 10	Land Use
Chapter IV	IV – 1 to IV -22	Significant and Critical Natural Resources
Chapter V	V – 1 to V – 3	Cultural Resources
Chapter VI	VI – 1 to VI – 8	Fiscal Review of Acton
Chapter VII	VII – 1 to VII – 9	Public Facilities and Services
Chapter VIII	VIII – 1 to VIII – 11	Transportation
Chapter IX	IX 1 to IX – 37	Goals, Policies, Implementation Strategies, Future Land Use Plan and Regional Coordination

### List of Maps

Regional Map

Base Map

Existing Inventory of Residential Units

Lands not Readily Available for Development

Residential Permits 1991-2002

Developable Land

Plant and Animal Locations and Habitat

Critical Habitat Analysis

Watersheds

NWI Rated Wetlands

Hydric Soils

Soils Suitable for Septic Systems

Aquifers

FEMA 100 Year Floodplain

Transportation Infrastructure

Functional Classification  
Roadways Regulated by DOT Access Management Rules  
Developable Land In Growth Area  
Soils Most Suitable for Septic in Growth Area  
Future Land Use Map

# ACTON Base Map



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

## Legend

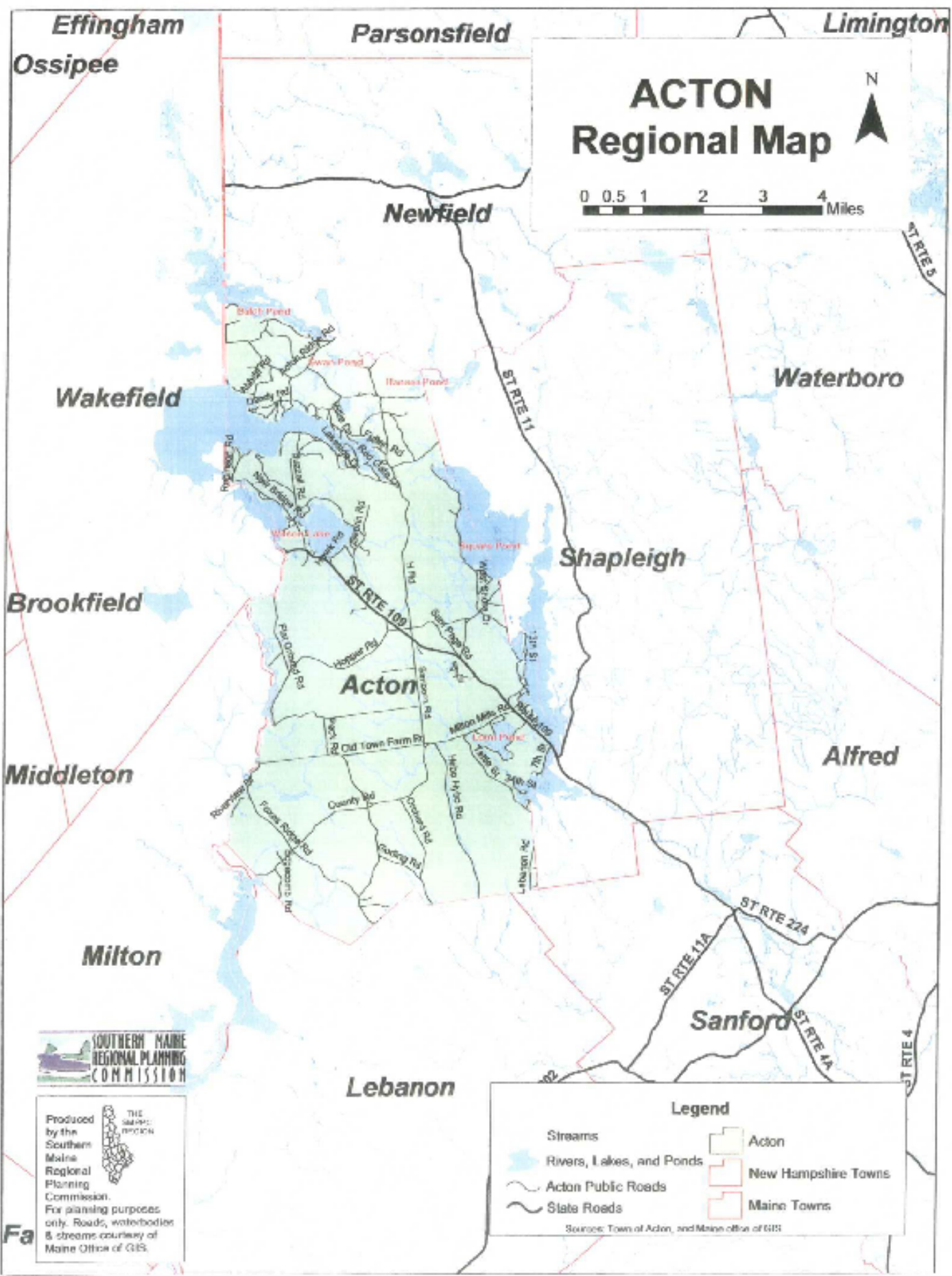
- Streams
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- Tax Parcels

Sources: Town of Acton, and Maine office of GIS.



Produced  
by the  
Southern  
Maine  
Regional  
Planning  
Commission.  
For planning purposes  
only. Roads, water bodies  
& streams courtesy of  
Maine Office of GIS.





**Effingham**  
**Ossipee**

**Parsonsfield**

**Limington**

# ACTON Regional Map



0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles

**Newfield**

**Wakefield**

**Waterboro**

**Brookfield**

**Shapleigh**

**Acton**

**Alfred**

**Middleton**

**Milton**

**Sanford**

**Lebanon**



Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.

**Legend**

Streams	Acton
Rivers, Lakes, and Ponds	New Hampshire Towns
Acton Public Roads	Maine Towns
State Roads	

Source: Town of Acton, and Maine office of GIS

**Fa**

## Introduction

What is now Acton was part of a much larger tract of land in southwestern Maine purchased in 1661 by Francis Small from Chief Sunday of the Newichawannock Tribe. In 1771, the name “Hubbardstown Plantation” was given to the area now made up of Acton and Shapleigh.

In 1776, the first settlement of Acton Corner was made by Benjamin Kines, Clement Steele and John York -- all of York, Maine. These settlers were soon followed by Captain William Reeves, who built the bridge across the narrows of Mousam Lake and a house nearby. Settlement of the areas occurred more rapidly once a new road was constructed between the Lebanon town line and the Little Ossipee River.

The town’s abundance of good waterpower led to the establishment of a number of mill operations. The first mill in town was a grist mill, built in 1779 on the Salmon Falls River near Wakefield by Joseph Parsons. Home’s Mill became the home of a sawmill in 1790 and a grist mill in 1830. A hemp mill, carding mill, felting mill and additional sawmills also operated during the 1800s. A shoe factory located above the Brackett Bridge employed 200 people and operated until the 1920s. The building was later used for cloth manufacturing.

In 1785, Hubbardstown Plantation was incorporated as a town and given the name Shapleigh, after an early proprietor. In 1828, a proposition was approved dividing Shapleigh into two individual townships. An act of incorporation was passed in 1830 and the town of Acton was born.

The Shapleigh and Acton Agricultural Society was formed in 1866, and began sponsoring an annual fair and cattle show, A permanent site for the fair in Acton was established in 1889 and the fair has been held there ever since.

Acton’s commercial history was highlighted by two rather unique engineering feats: construction of the Great East Canal and the Acton Silver Mines. The Great East Canal, part of a system of dams and waterworks that controls water flow on the Salmon Falls, was constructed during the 1850s and 60s. The 3/4-mile canal was blasted through ledge and included a granite archway at the bridge crossing.

During the later 1800s, a number of silver mines were developed in South Acton near Goding Brook and the Lebanon town line. During this era, there was a surge of interest nation-wide in gold and silver mining, and after the discovery of a significant silver vein in Acton in 1877, a series of mine shafts were drilled, Mining activity peaked during the 1880s and declined thereafter, leading to abandonment of the mines. Today, a series of water-filled shafts and building foundations are still evident.

Acton’s population declined throughout much of the later 1800s and early 1900s as a migration west and to urban areas began. It was not until 1960 that the population began to grow again, fueled by new residents seeking a rural community within commuting distance of jobs.

Today, the town has several distinct personalities: as a rural community with large amounts of open space and a few surviving resource-based enterprises such as apple orchards and gravel pits; as a summer resort community with a significant influx of summer residents on the lakes; and increasingly, as a bedroom community of Sanford and other employment centers.

It is this rural atmosphere and the relationship of Acton to its surrounding communities and the region which has begun to change over the past decade. Acton and the communities around it –including Shapleigh, Lebanon, Alfred and Newfield - are becoming popular places to live for a variety of reasons. First they are close to Sanford and provide employment opportunities within a short drive of a number of

large employers. Secondly, it has become obvious over the last decade that people are more willing to drive greater distances for work than at any time perhaps in our history. Thus, a family might move to Acton and have one or both spouses working in a place such as Portsmouth or Portland as well. Third, housing affordability (or the purchase of land) is more a reality for people wishing to live in Acton than places south of Sanford (although this is rapidly changing). Finally, Acton offers small town character, lakes, and wonderful natural areas while not being entirely remote. It is, in effect, becoming less rural, yet is still not suburban (even by Maine standards).

Some of the recent development activity points to these trends and the desirability of Acton as a place to live for folks who wish to move to a more rural setting (whether from Portland or Massachusetts). This combined with what may be the move of many lakeside cottage owners to winterize and make Acton more than just a summer home has tremendous implications for the town.

Through this Comprehensive Plan the town hopes to address many of these issues and plot a course to maintain the character and culture of Acton.

### **Comprehensive Planning in Acton**

Acton adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1991 during the first round of planning grants under the 1988 Growth Management Act. The plan was found to be consistent at that time by the Maine State Planning Office.. The plan laid out an area for village type development, a transitional growth area and a rural growth area. The village zone was designated for one acre minimum lot sizes, a transitional growth area of 1.5 acre lot sizes, and rural zones of 2 acre minimums. An area for light industrial and commercial growth was also delineated.

While the plan was easily adopted at Town Meeting the implementation of the plan was not as smooth. Due to citizen opposition to the one acre minimum lot sizes in the “village”, the zoning changes were easily defeated. Thus the town has ended up in the place where it was prior to 1991 – with two acre minimum lot sizes throughout the town and “floating” commercial and industrial zones.

In 2002, a new Comprehensive Planning Committee was formed to examine the existing plan, and devise a new plan to take to voters once again. In 2003 the town also applied for and received a grant from the Maine State Planning Office to help with the development of the plan. These efforts have resulted in the plan that follows.

Rather than going into the detail of the first plan, this effort focuses more on policies and strategies which might be implemented upon adoption of the plan (rather than a elaborate and exhaustive inventory of town resources and infrastructure). The Committee was mindful of the failings of the last growth management effort and wished to ensure that any recommendations to arise from the plan could later be implemented through zoning, subdivision and other non-regulatory means.

### **Comprehensive Plan Survey**

A small survey of residents was conducted to determine community opinion regarding growth and development. Rather than mailing a survey, the Committee handed surveys out at Town meetings, at corner stores and at Town Hall and asked residents to respond. In all, about 12% of the town’s residents

responded to the survey. The actual survey can be seen on the following pages. Opinions are summarized below:

### Why do you live in Acton?

For the most part respondents lived in Acton because attractiveness of the town, low crime rate, low taxes and the sense of community. Less important were issues such a proximity to employment and family considerations.

### Growth and development

Residents were very concerned that open space, natural areas and community character are being lost to development. There was not as much (or little concern) about the lack of affordable housing. There was also concern about the town's ability to pay for capital improvements over the next decade. Residents also seemed to favor large lot zoning over more compact development pattern yet when asked the question in a different way, stated a preference for higher density development near an existing village (which may signify a need for more education about the issue). There was however, a preference for cluster development as compared to standard two- acre lot sizes.

### Town planning

There was support for impact fees to help pay for needed infrastructure. There was also fairly strong support for adopting a minimum lot size for rural areas that exceeded the current two- acre minimum. Conversely there was little support for adopting a growth area of less than two acres (the reason the last zoning ordinance revision was defeated). Similarly there was little support for encouraging a broad mix of housing types.



## Environmental

There was strong support for working with the newly formed Land Trust in the region and for a more active town role in protecting sensitive natural resources including the lakes and their water quality. There was even support for spending town tax dollars on the purchase of open space. There was also interest in developing a system of bikeways, trails and pedestrian paths.

## Commercial and economic development

There was strong support for encouraging home based businesses and also for establishing a zone for essential services such as hardware stores, small grocery stores and professional services. Residents did not seem interested in encouraging commercial and industrial growth.

**ACTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SURVEY**

The following questions relate to your reasons for choosing Acton as a place to live, a place to own property, and your opinions on growth and development In the Town.

**Q-1. Please rate the following reasons as to why you have moved to, are continuing to live in, or own property in Acton, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important:**

	Not at all	Important	Very Important		
___ Attractiveness of the Town	6	6	39	33	41
___ Low crime rate	5	2	10	36	78
___ Proximity to employment	46	16	27	17	20
___ Family	23	11	18	23	44
___ Quality of School system	27	7	21	29	37
___ Tax rate	3	12	26	33	45
___ Sense of community in town	9	12	24	40	32
Other _____					

**Growth and Development**

**In the last ten years the town of Acton has grown from a year round population of 1,727 in 1990 to a population of 2,145 in 2000 (a 24% increase). The number of housing units in town has increased from 1,596 in 1990 to 1,910 in 2000 (a 20% increase), and the number of units occupied year-round increased from 640 to 855 (a 34% increase). From 1990 to 1999, there were a total of 169 building permits issued by the Town, an average of 17 per year for the decade. Since 2000, the pace of growth has increased, with 69 permits issued from 2000-2001 an average of 23 per year.**

*With these facts in mind please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Circle the number that best represents your views by using a scale of one to five where one means strongly disagree and five means strongly agree. No opinion is registered with a 9.*

The following best represents my feelings on current issues concerning the town of Acton:

	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	No Opinion
<b><u>Impacts of growth</u></b>			
Q-2. Important open space and natural areas may be lost to development.	4	5	3
Q-3. There is a lack of affordable housing.	31	26	24
Q-4 .The traditional character of the town is being threatened by new development.	9	11	6
Q-5. The town’s ability to pay for needed capital improvements in the next 5-10 years is an issue of concern.	9	6	4
Q-6. Increased traffic is one of the most important issues facing the town today.	26	15	5

**Q-7. Listed below are descriptions of different patterns of residential development. As of 2000, 95 percent of the Town’s housing units were single-family detached units, four percent were mobile homes, and less than one percent were multi-**

**family. Thinking about the existing conditions, the current growth rate and how you would like Acton to grow in the future, please check the one description that best describes your preference for future residential development in Acton:**

- 9 Subdivisions dispersed throughout the town with groups of similarly sized homes on similar lots.
- 17 Neighborhoods with a mix of housing sizes, types (single family and multi-family) and lot sizes.
- 25 Small village and community centers with a mix of housing close to stores and schools.
- 75 Developments on large 2-3 acre lots with large setback and frontage requirements.

**The Town currently has a zoning ordinance which stipulates that all areas in Acton shall have a minimum lot size of 90,000 square feet (about 2 acres), with the exception of the Shoreland District, which allows lots of 40,000 square feet (about 1 acre). With this in mind, how would you feel about the following efforts (where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means you strongly agree)?**

	Strongly disagree		Strongly agree		No Opinion	
Q-8. The preferable land use pattern is higher density development near and adjacent to villages and lower density development in rural areas.	12	10	33	31	26	19
Q-9. Assume that a developer has purchased a 60+ acre parcel of land in an undeveloped portion of Acton with a 2-acre minimum lot size requirement. This developer plans to build single- family houses on the site. Which of the following development patterns would you prefer to see?						
1. 48— 30 homes, each on a 2-acre lot						
2. 58— 30 homes on 30 acres with the remaining 30 acres preserved as open space.						
3. 25 — Uncertain						

**Town’s Role in Growth Management**

	Strongly disagree		Strongly agree		No Opinion	
Q-10. The town should require that new residential developments be clustered where appropriate (as described in Q-9, option 2 above) so a part of the site remains as open space.	14	14	20	34	42	8
Q-11. The municipality should institute a system of impact fees on new development to help pay for needed public infrastructure (roads, recreation/open space, parking, etc)	11	3	14	24	80	3
Q-12. The town should consider adopting a rural zone in which a lot size larger than two acres is required	20	10	19	32	50	4
Q-13. The town should consider adopting a growth zone in which a lot size smaller than two acres is permitted.	65	15	16	12	20	

**The state of Maine has set a goal that 10% of all new housing units be “affordable” to people within the community. The median sale price for all homes in Acton as of 2002 was \$153,750, a price which would require an annual household income of \$54,000, and Acton’s median household income as of 2002 was Just \$37,200. With this in mind, how do you feel about the following statement?**

	Strongly disagree		Strongly agree		No Opinion	
Q-14. The town should encourage a broad mix and diversity of housing types, including multi-family units, affordable housing, and mobile home parks.	69	22	18	10	11	6

**Environmental**

Q-15. The town should work with the local land trust to ensure that important open spaces and environmentally important areas remain undeveloped.	7	3	10	24	90	1
Q-16. The town should play a more active role in guiding development away from sensitive areas and preventing sprawl by purchasing property in the rural parts of town.	14	15	15	38	60	6
Q-17. I would be willing to support a town land acquisition program using town tax dollars to purchase areas of critical environmental importance as well as public access to water bodies and other natural features.	22	6	20	29	48	2
Q-18. The town is doing an adequate job of protecting wetlands, waterways and other areas of environmental significance.	12	14	46	14	23	30 its
Q-19. The town should be more involved in the monitoring of the water quality of its lakes.	5	4	19	34	60	11
Q-20. The town should:						
Develop a system of bikeways, trails and pedestrian paths.	24	10	29	21	37	5
Provide for public access to the water for recreational uses.	28	12	20	24	43	1

**Commercial and Economic Development**

Q-21. The town should work more actively to encourage small home-based businesses and home occupations in the town.	13	7	31	40	36	7
Q-22. The town should seek to diversify the tax base by encouraging more commercial and industrial growth.	41	18	26	19	28	2
Q-23. A zone should be established which encourages the development of essential services such as small hardware stores, grocery stores and professional offices.	17	12	27	27	45	3

**Town Character**

Q-24. It is important to support town efforts to preserve our community's historical character.	4	2	20	25	77	1
Q-25. It is important to maintain and preserve a K-S school in Acton	8	3	9	17	80	2
Q-26. The town needs to make permanent arrangements with one area high school to send its students there.	18	7	11	10	79	4
Q-27. Which public high school would you most like to see Acton students attending? 1. Noble <b>21</b> 2. Sanford <b>77</b> 3. Massabesic <b>3</b> 4. Other <u><b>12</b></u>						

**Demographics**

Q-28. Please indicate which one of the following best describes your residency in Acton:						
1. Year-round resident (more than 10 months/year)	118					
2. Part-year resident (5 to 10 months/year)	11					
3. Seasonal resident (4 or less months/year)	4					
4. Non-resident property owner	1					
4. Non-resident business owner/manager						

5.

Q-29. Please indicate which of the following apply to you:

- |                                                             |        |            |       |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|-------|------------|
| a. Registered voter in Acton                                | 1. Yes | <b>122</b> | 2. No | <b>10</b>  |
| b. Taxpayer in Acton                                        | 1. Yes | <b>131</b> | 2. No | <b>4</b>   |
| c. Owner of home, condo, or other residential unit in Acton | 1. Yes | <b>126</b> | 2. No | <b>5</b>   |
| d. Owner of vacant land in Acton                            | 1. Yes | <b>39</b>  | 2. No | <b>71</b>  |
| e. Owner of commercial property in Acton                    | 1. Yes | <b>5</b>   | 2. No | <b>89</b>  |
| f. Owner of a business in Acton                             | 1. Yes | <b>12</b>  | 2. No | <b>97</b>  |
| g. Renter                                                   | 1. Yes | <b>0</b>   | 2. No | <b>108</b> |

Q-30. Please indicate how long you have been a resident of Acton:

- |                        |           |                         |           |                      |           |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. Two years or less   | <b>12</b> | 2. Two to five years    | <b>24</b> | 3. Five to ten years | <b>30</b> |
| 4. Ten to twenty years | <b>37</b> | 5. Twenty or more years | <b>27</b> | 6. Non-resident      | <b>5</b>  |

Q-31. In what community is your job located:

- |                    |           |                       |           |                   |           |                   |           |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. Acton           | <b>26</b> | 2. Sanford/Springvale | <b>14</b> | 3. Biddeford/Saco | <b>4</b>  | 4. Portland metro | <b>3</b>  |
| 5. Rochester/Dover | <b>9</b>  | 6. Portsmouth         | <b>10</b> | 7. Retired        | <b>41</b> | 8. Other          | <b>19</b> |

Q-32. Please circle the box that best corresponds to your household's total annual income:

- |                        |           |                         |           |                       |           |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1. Less than \$25,000  | <b>20</b> | 2. \$25,001 to \$49,999 | <b>45</b> | 3. \$50,000— \$74,999 | <b>32</b> |
| 4. \$75,000 — \$99,999 | <b>16</b> | 5. More than \$100,000  | <b>6</b>  |                       |           |

Q-33. Please indicate in which of the following areas you live and/or own property:

- |                 |           |                    |           |                          |           |                |          |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------|
| 1. Village area | <b>11</b> | 2. Great East Lake | <b>22</b> | 3. Wilson Lake/Horn Pond | <b>15</b> | 4. Square Pond | <b>9</b> |
| 5. Mousam Lake  | <b>14</b> | 6. Loon Pond       | <b>12</b> | 7. Rural/Other           | <b>45</b> |                |          |

Q-34. Please indicate the age of the respondent.

- |             |          |          |          |          |           |          |           |          |           |                |           |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| 1. Under 25 | <b>1</b> | 2. 25-34 | <b>9</b> | 3. 35-44 | <b>22</b> | 4. 45-54 | <b>25</b> | 5. 55-64 | <b>22</b> | 6. 65 or older | <b>26</b> |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|

Q-35. What is the single most important issue facing Acton today?

- 1. Development**
- 2. Property taxes**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

There was strong support for encouraging home based businesses and also for establishing a zone for essential services such as hardware stores, small grocery stores and professional services. Residents did not seem interested in encouraging commercial and industrial growth.

#### Town character

There was nearly universal support in maintaining a K-8 school in Acton. Most residents, when presented a choice stated they would most like to see Acton students attend Sanford High School and that the town strongly needed to make a permanent arrangement to send their students somewhere.

## Chapter I

### Economic and Demographic Changes in Acton 1990 – 2000

#### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

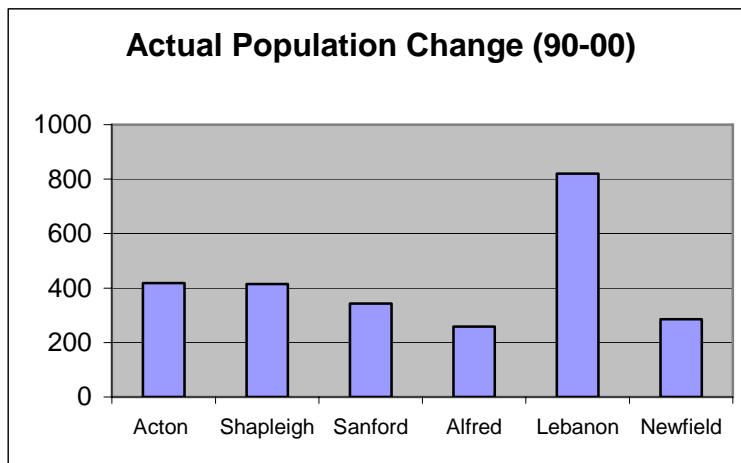
##### Population Growth

Similar to many of its neighbors, Acton grew at a rapid rate from the period 1990-2000. The period 1980-1990 also saw rapid growth (41%), and in fact was higher than the growth rate for the period 1990-2000 (24%). Yet the growth rate for the last decade made Acton one of the faster growing communities in York County (ninth out of twenty nine).

<u>1990 Population</u>	<u>2000 Population</u>	<u>2003 Estimate</u>
1,727	2,145	2,269

Of course this analysis does not necessarily tell us where Acton grew. That is a subject for a later chapter.

The growth in Acton seems to be part of a growing trend of more sustained development in the more rural parts of York County. The tables and charts below compare the growth of Acton to its neighbors:



Notably, Acton grew in actual population faster than all but one of its neighbors, including Sanford (which is a community of 21,000). Only Lebanon, which grew by about 800 people during the 1990s added more people than Acton. However, on a percentage basis (as shown on the following page), Acton grew at a faster rate than did Lebanon, as Lebanon's 1990 population was 4,263—about 2.5 times that of Acton's 1990 population of 1,727.

Although this growth was rapid it was not as high as anticipated in the last plan. Population estimates from the 1991 plan called for three possible growth scenarios.

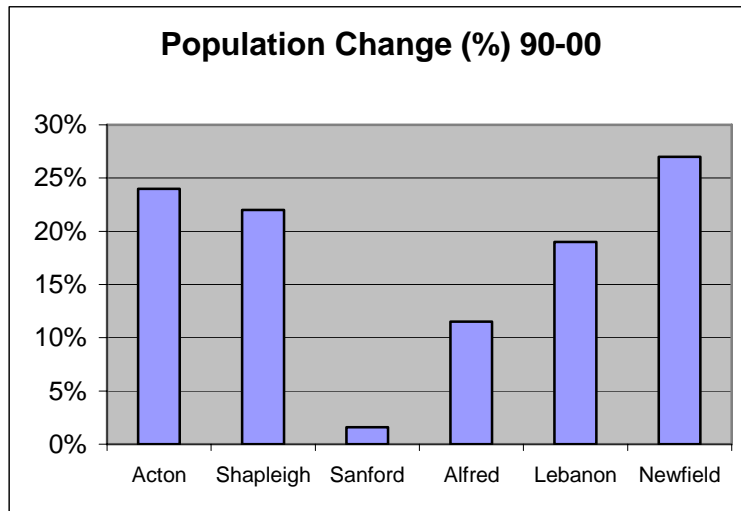
Scenario one called for thirty new homes per year = 2,850 people

Scenario two called for a growth rate of about 60% = 3,275 people

Scenario three called for a growth rate of 66% = 3,400 people.

The recession of the early nineties slowed down all growth rates for the region although evidence suggests they are once again on the increase.

The change by percentage for Acton in comparison to its neighbors is even more striking, as shown below.



This chart (as well as the one above it) speaks to the issue of sprawl and the regional nature of population movement. It is obvious that Sanford, even as a well populated service center is not growing nearly as quickly as Acton, Shapleigh, Newfield, and other surrounding towns. This has profound implications for the use of land and fiscal issues (such as Sanford closing a school while Acton goes about adding to one).

### Age Profile

The age composition of Acton has also changed. The median age in 1990 was 33.7. It is now 41.1. This represents a fairly dramatic increase in the median age of 22%. As far as school age population is concerned the following table highlights changes from 1990-2000 (the Census age groups from 90-00 do not match, making a comparison difficult):

Age Group	1990	2000
Under 5	120	119
Under 18	435	544



Thus there was a 25% increase in the school age population between 1990 and 2000. This will be explored more fully in the Public Facilities section

### *Future Population Growth Scenarios*

The State Planning Office (SPO) has developed a population forecast for use in Comprehensive Plans. Its projections are as follows for Acton:

2000 Population	2005	2010	2015
2,145	2,335	2,476	2,607

The possible change from 2000 to 2010 represents an increase of 15%, much smaller than either the 1980s or 1990s. This estimate assumes an increase of 226 housing units in Acton over that fifteen year period.

Another way to look at possible growth is to take the town's building cap into account. Assuming, that on average, the town distributes 35 permits per year, we can multiply that by the average household size (2.51) and project an additional 878 people living in Acton in ten years (an increase of 41%). This represents a much greater increase than SPO has projected.

### **Seasonal Population**

In considering existing and future development patterns in Acton, its status as a popular seasonal lakeside community must be considered. As of 1994, the last year for which seasonal populations were estimated in York County, Acton's seasonal population was pegged at nearly 4,000 people, more than twice that of its year-round population. For the current year, it might be assumed the summer population is close to 4,300.

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

### Income Data

For a rural town, Acton's income levels in the 2000 Census were fairly strong. Its per capita income, as of 2000, was \$19,447 and its median family income was \$45,353.

Although these figures ranked below countywide and statewide averages, they exceeded the levels of Acton's neighboring towns, as shown in the table below. Of towns near Acton, only Alfred had a higher median family income than Acton, and none of the four other towns in the vicinity had higher per capita income levels.

### Income Levels, 2000 Census

	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income
Acton	\$19,447	\$39,036	\$45,353
Alfred	\$19,337	\$40,583	\$47,625
Lebanon	\$15,503	\$40,021	\$41,713
Newfield	\$16,280	\$38,654	\$41,563
Sanford	\$16,951	\$34,668	\$43,021
York County	\$21,225	\$43,630	\$51,419
Maine	\$19,533	\$37,240	\$45,179

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Acton's median household income level in 2000 was not as strong—at just \$39,036, it trailed both Alfred and Lebanon in this category. The disparity between Acton's high per capita income level and fairly modest median household level can be explained by the town's relatively small average household size of 2.51, whereas its average family size was 2.91.

Looking at income levels by category, Acton's households are strongly concentrated in the middle-income ranges. As the table to the right shows, 61 percent of the town's households earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year, compared with 54 percent of all households in York County and just 52 percent of all households in Maine.

### Income Profile, 2000 Census

	Acton	York County	State of Maine
Under \$15,000	14.5%	13.5%	17.8%
\$15,000-24,999	10.6%	12.7%	14.8%
\$25,000-34,999	17.5%	12.9%	14.2%
\$35,000-49,999	23.4%	18.1%	18.3%
\$50,000-74,999	20.2%	23.3%	19.4%
\$75,000-99,999	5.7%	10.6%	8.4%
\$100,000+	8.1%	8.8%	7.1%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Acton has a lower share of high-income households than do the county and state, as just 14 percent of the town's households earned more than \$75,000 in 2000. For all of York County, 19 percent attained this income level, and 16 percent of all households in Maine did so as well. However, Acton's share of very high-income households (over \$100,000) was fairly substantial, at 8.1 percent, due in no small part to its concentration of waterfront properties.

**Employment by Town**

Acton is a primarily residential town with a very small employment base. According to the Maine Department of Labor, 177 people were employed full-time in the town as of 2000. While this number is very small, it has grown since 1990, when the town’s employment base was 122. This represents a growth rate of 45 percent.

**Jobs by Town, 1990-2000**

	1990	2000	Number Change	Percent Change
Acton	122	177	55	45.1%
Alfred	498	594	96	19.3%
Lebanon	340	359	19	5.6%
Newfield	55	72	17	30.9%
Sanford	8,546	9,284	738	8.6%
York County	57,845	60,295	2,450	4.2%
Maine	525,363	574,257	48,894	9.3%

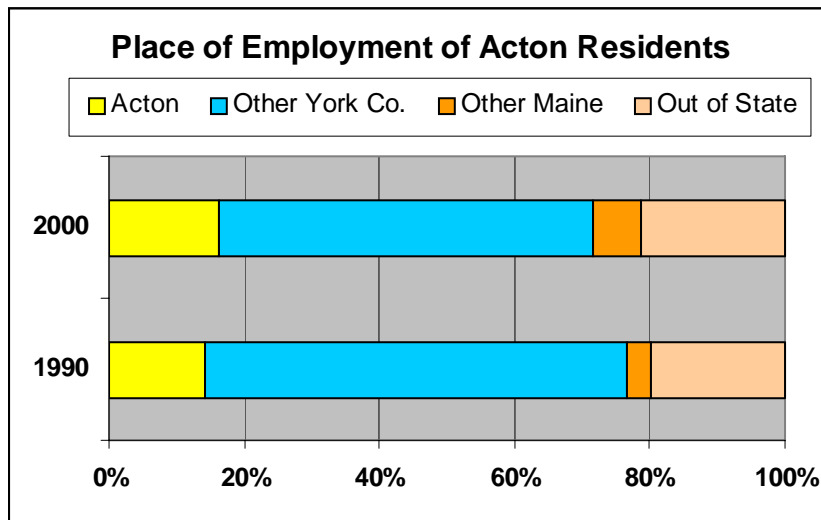
Source: Maine Department of Labor

Acton is part of the Sanford Economic Summary Area

(ESA), as defined by the Maine State Planning Office. Sanford is the major employment center for inland York County, as it had a base of nearly 9,300 jobs as of 2000. Sanford’s employment level grew by 8.6 percent during the 1990s, as 738 jobs were added to the 1990 base of 8,546. Sanford’s job growth rate outpaced York County as a whole, which only grew by 4.2 percent during the decade, but lagged slightly behind the state’s growth rate of 9.3 percent.

**Commuting Patterns**

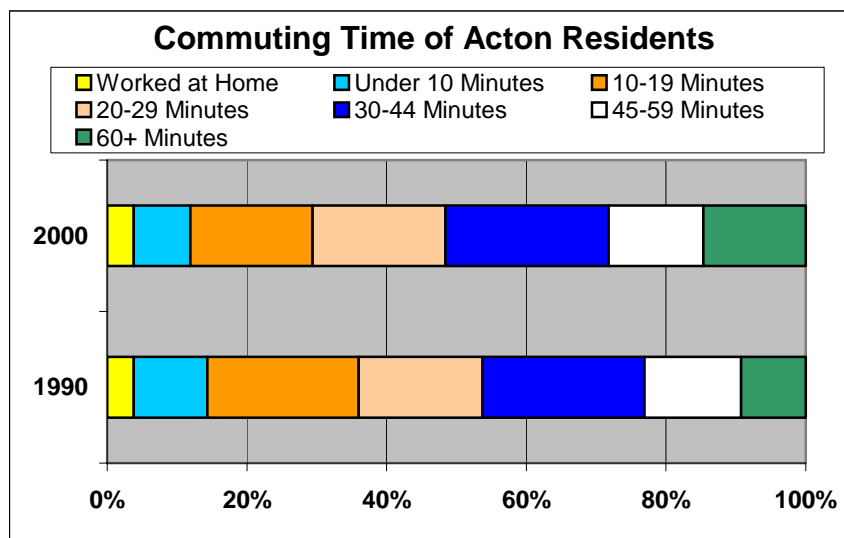
Acton is increasingly evolving from a rural town with a primarily seasonal population base to an outlying bedroom community for employment centers like Sanford, Rochester, NH, and even coastal areas. The chart below compares the places of employment of Acton residents in 1990 versus 2000.



During the decade, a number of trends took place. First of all, the sheer number of employed residents of the town increased dramatically, from 789 in 1990 to 942 in 2000, an increase of 19 percent. Secondly, the share of Acton commuters who worked outside

of York County jumped from 23 to 29 percent. At the same time, the share of Acton residents who also worked in the town increased during the 1990s, from 14 to 16 percent. Of the four geographic areas, only the remainder of York County lost share, as the percentage of Acton residents working elsewhere in the county dropped from 62 to 55 percent.

Commuting times of Acton residents also displayed major changes during the 1990s. In 1990, the mean commuting time of Acton residents was 28.1 minutes; by 2000, the mean time was 36.1 minutes, representing a 28 percent increase. This mean was influenced greatly by the share of Acton residents commuting more than 60 minutes each way to work. In 1990, just nine percent of the town's commuters traveled this far to work; by 2000, the share traveling more than an hour jumped to 15 percent.



The table below compares the top commuting destinations for Acton residents in 1990 and 2000. Although Sanford remains the top destination for Acton commuters, it is far less likely to be the place of work of Acton residents. In 1990, 36 percent of Acton commuters worked in Sanford, but by 2000, just 21 percent did so. An increasing number of Acton commuters work within the town, as the number staying put for work grew from 112 in 1990 to 152 in 2000.

Other increasingly popular commuting destinations for Acton residents include Saco/Biddeford (22 commuters in 1990, 72 in 2000), Portland/South Portland (12 in 1990, 30 in 2000), and Rochester/Dover, NH (45 in 1990, 77 in 2000). Sharp increases were also seen in commuting to other towns in York County such as Kennebunk, Wells, Alfred, and Lebanon. Far fewer Acton residents now commute to Kittery, which saw its share drop from 41 in 1990 to just 15 in 2000.

**Places of Work of Acton Commuters, 1990-2000**  
**Sorted by 2000 Place of Work**

Town	State	1990		2000	
		No. Employed	% of Total	No. Employed	% of Total
Sanford	ME	287	36.4%	204	21.7%
Acton	ME	112	14.2%	152	16.1%
Rochester	NH	29	3.7%	52	5.5%
Saco	ME	3	0.4%	47	5.0%
Wells	ME	16	2.0%	36	3.8%
North Berwick	ME	30	3.8%	32	3.4%
Kennebunk	ME	7	0.9%	28	3.0%
Biddeford	ME	19	2.4%	25	2.7%
Dover	NH	16	2.0%	25	2.7%
Lebanon	ME	7	0.9%	21	2.2%
Shapleigh	ME	22	2.8%	20	2.1%
Portsmouth	NH	10	1.3%	20	2.1%
Alfred	ME	4	0.5%	19	2.0%
York	ME	11	1.4%	17	1.8%
South Portland	ME	0	0.0%	16	1.7%
Kittery	ME	41	5.2%	15	1.6%
Portland	ME	12	1.5%	14	1.5%
Ogunquit	ME	14	1.8%	14	1.5%
Waterboro	ME	6	0.8%	10	1.1%
Other Maine		41	5.2%	70	7.4%
Other out-of-State		102	12.9%	105	11.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>789</b>		<b>942</b>	

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing

**Summary Discussion**

Acton is still primarily a rural community. However, the data from 1990-2000 indicates this may in fact be slowly changing. The region grew at a faster clip, both in real and percentage terms than nearly all its neighbors. Perhaps the most significant comparison is when one looks at the growth of Acton as compared to Sanford. Acton grew faster even in real population increase than a town which is nearly eight times its size. This is evidence of the regional nature of sprawl and population growth in the region. Sanford, as a service center for the surrounding communities lags behind them in population growth (and is closing neighborhood schools).

Like the rest of the nation the population of Acton is growing older. Within Acton, the rate as an average is actually more rapid rate than the region as a whole. This is significant for a few reasons; elderly residents may demand different types of services than non-elderly; they are sometimes more hesitant to spend limited income on public and municipal services such as schools and recreation; yet they may also desire some services to be located within the community. While perhaps not an issue at this time the town may need to recognize this demographic change in the years ahead.

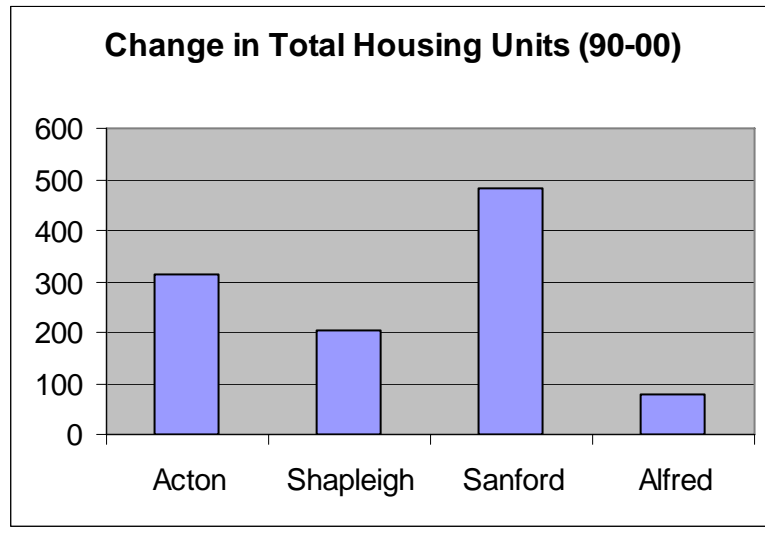
Part of this change may be related to the change of what were once seasonal homes and vacation cottages to year round dwellings. It is possible many residents who once vacationed in Acton for summers are now choosing to live there as their principal residence during retirement. This change from seasonal to year round residence may become more evident in the years ahead. Currently, the town does require a change from seasonal to year round home to come under the provisions of the town Growth Ordinance.

Economically, Acton is still tied to Sanford for the most part, although this has changed during the last decade (possibly due to a number of layoffs in the Sanford manufacturing sector). While in 1990 about 50% of Acton residents worked in Sanford or Acton, that number today is 37%. The rest of the residents drive to a number of different locations. Acton is basically a rural bedroom community where people drive fairly long distances for their employment. Based on survey responses, it seems clear that residents do not want large scale commercial/industrial development, although they would like opportunities to buy essential goods within the town and also have the opportunity to develop home based and small business opportunities (with town encouragement). This is relatively consistent of the way rural communities would like to see their town develop from an economic standpoint. Of course, Acton also has an advantage of having highly taxable waterfront properties as part of their municipal revenue base.

It appears that with a growth cap in place, Acton's population might increase 800-900 people over the next ten years. This would represent a growth rate of 41%, which is rapid in both percentage and real terms. This would raise the population of Acton to 2,900-to 3,000 people. What this may mean is discussed in following chapters.

## Chapter II – Housing

Acton grew at a fairly substantial rate (as compared to its neighbors as far as housing growth was concerned) in the period 1990-2000. The chart below compares Acton's 314 housing unit increase with some of the surrounding communities.



The issue of affordable housing has once again risen to a level of importance in York County. This is somewhat similar to the late eighties when housing prices soared and the number of towns instituting growth caps rose in response. A review of housing costs and affordability factors shows that Acton is not different from the rest of the county – there is a severe shortage of affordable housing from both a homeownership point of view and a rental perspective.

The following table represents recent data supplied by the Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) regarding the so called affordability index. Figures are given for all of the region for comparison purposes:

### 2002 Affordability Index

(The affordability index is a method to measure the affordability of homes within a region)

Note: An Index of less than 1 is Unaffordable, an Index of more than 1 is Affordable.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Median Income</u>	<u>*Median Home</u>	<u>Median Income Can Afford</u>	<u>Income Needed</u>
Ogunquit	0.45	\$62,291	\$417,500	\$186,200	\$139,670
Kittery	0.58	\$45,839	\$225,000	\$130,107	\$79,271
Kennebunkport	0.60	\$66,517	\$326,500	\$195,987	\$110,813
York	0.63	\$62,965	\$289,250	\$182,865	\$99,596
Limington	0.68	\$35,475	\$146,000	\$99,059	\$52,285
Kittery/York Housing Market	0.69	\$55,729	\$229,500	\$158,178	\$80,857
Eliot	0.69	\$59,741	\$253,000	\$174,498	\$86,617
Acton	0.69	\$37,184	\$153,750	\$106,092	\$53,888
Biddeford	0.70	\$36,674	\$143,500	\$100,638	\$52,294
Kennebunk	0.71	\$55,048	\$220,000	\$155,911	\$77,676
Alfred	0.74	\$38,182	\$151,600	\$111,523	\$51,903

<u>Location</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Median Income</u>	<u>*Median Home</u>	<u>Median Income Can Afford</u>	<u>Income Needed</u>
Biddeford Housing Market	0.76	\$49,048	\$185,000	\$141,493	\$64,129
Arundel	0.79	\$51,865	\$189,000	\$149,620	\$65,516
Berwick	0.82	\$44,840	\$152,000	\$124,283	\$54,840
Sanford	0.82	\$37,269	\$122,750	\$100,445	\$45,545
Hollis	0.83	\$41,960	\$146,000	\$120,978	\$50,638
York County	0.83	\$47,576	\$162,500	\$135,640	\$56,997
Limerick	0.84	\$37,387	\$124,000	\$104,766	\$44,251
South Berwick	0.85	\$60,301	\$200,000	\$169,673	\$71,079
Parsonsfield	0.85	\$30,946	\$102,500	\$87,341	\$36,317
Old Orchard Beach	0.85	\$39,745	\$121,000	\$103,373	\$46,522
Wells	0.86	\$54,970	\$188,750	\$162,050	\$64,027
Shapleigh	0.987	\$38,533	\$131,200	\$113,645	\$44,485
Congressional District 1	0.87	\$47,572	\$154,900	\$134,328	\$54,857
Portland Housing Market	0.87	\$53,323	\$167,900	\$145,930	\$61,351
North Berwick	0.88	\$49,779	\$163,000	\$143,038	\$56,726
Saco	0.88	\$48,527	\$149,900	\$132,090	\$55,070
Newfield	0.89	\$38,537	\$129,000	\$114,290	\$43,497
Maine	0.89	\$42,029	\$133,500	\$118,618	\$47,302
Sanford Housing market	0.91	\$41,147	\$129,788	\$118,169	\$45,193
Lebanon	0.93	\$48,421	\$148,450	\$137,412	\$52,310
Cornish	0.94	\$33,449	\$101,100	\$94,552	\$35,765
Sebago lakes Regional Housing Market	0.95	\$41,358	\$122,750	\$116,912	\$43,423
Lyman	0.95	\$51,583	\$159,000	\$151,459	\$54,151
Buxton	0.95	\$51,803	\$159,000	\$151,459	\$54,367
Waterboro	1.11	\$48,485	\$127,610	\$141,075	\$43,857

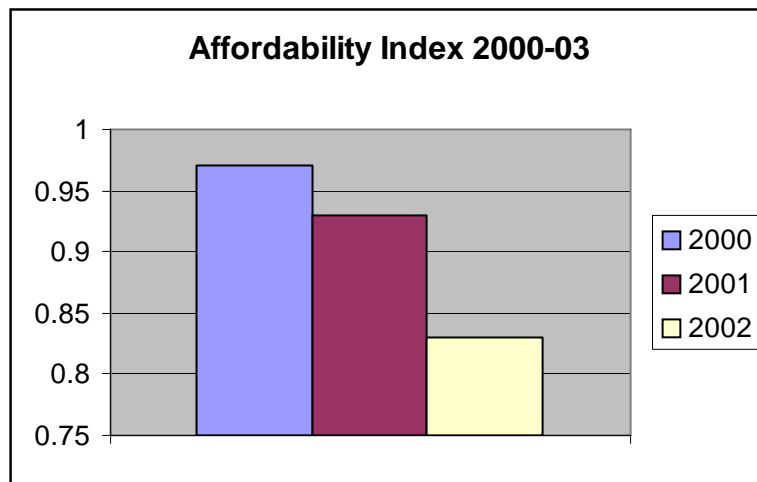


Acton ranks as the seventh (out of the twenty nine towns) in York County for unaffordable housing based on income and housing costs. This is partially due to the town's modest income levels, as well as the cost of housing.

As the chart below shows, housing in York County in general, continues to become less affordable.

### **York County Housing Affordability**

(The lower the index the more unaffordable a town or region is. An index of 1 is considered affordable)



A couple of other MSHA developed facts highlight the affordability issue in Acton. First 86% of the homes sold in Acton in 2002 were sold at a level above that which a median household could afford. Finally, 720 of the 901 households in Acton in 2002, could not afford a home sold at the median home price.

It should be pointed out that nearly 90% of Acton households own their own home. Yet it is clear that for young people living, working and possibly wishing to start their family in Acton, homeownership and affordability will be an issue.

Acton's housing stock is almost entirely single family. Of the towns 1,910 housing units only 1% is multi-family. This compares with the county average of 22%. The rest is single family (including 4% of which are mobile homes). Approximately 53% of the towns housing (or 1,028 units) is for seasonal use. This is a high percentage of seasonal housing (the county average is 17.6%). This is higher than a number of other seasonal destinations in the region such as York and/or the Lovell/Denmark area. The homeowner vacancy rate is .8% and the rental vacancy rate is 3.2%. Based on recent subdivision applications and marketing analysis presented by developers to the Acton planning Board there appears to still be a strong second home/seasonal housing market in Acton – even with little land left

along the lake fronts. In fact: a recent 14 unit proposal to the Planning Board was presented as seasonal in nature.

Detailed rental information is not available on a town by town basis. However, for the year 2000 in Acton there were 92 renter occupied units (year round) with an average household size of 2.5 (or 230 people). This represents about 10% of the town's population. Rents in the Sanford Housing Market averaged \$726 for a two bedroom unit. Within this housing market, approximately 52% of the renter households could not afford a 2 bedroom average rent.

According to the 2000 Census, 29 households in Acton paid more than 31% of their income for rent. The number of people this represents is not clear, but it does represent approximately 3.3% of the households in town.

It is clear that the rental vacancy rate is decreasing. In 1990 the rental vacancy rate was 6.9%. Now it is 3.2 %. Any rental vacancy rate under 5% is considered problematic.

### **Affordability Analysis**

The following analysis attempts to quantify the number of affordable units that will need to be created in Acton over the next 10-15 years. The number uses SPO figures of 226 units to be added in Acton over the next 15 years.

### **Affordable Housing Needs Town of Acton, 2000-2015**

#### **Income Levels of Existing Households, 2000**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Less than \$10,000	63	7.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	61	7.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	91	10.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	150	17.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	200	23.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	173	20.2%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	49	5.7%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	55	6.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4	0.5%
\$200,000 or more	9	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Median Household Income, 2000: \$39,038**  
**County Median, 2000: \$43,630**

#### **Year-Round Units Needed:**

Total Unit Demand, 2000-2015      226

% Seasonal, 2000 53.8%  
**Year-Round Unit Demand, 2000-15: 104**

Housing Needs by Category, 2000-2015	Percentages of 2000 HHs		Units Needed
	Town	County	
Very Low Income (Under \$15,000)	15%	13%	14
Low Income (\$15,000-24,999)	11%	13%	13
Moderate Income (\$25,000-49,999)	41%	31%	32
Above Median (\$50,000 and Up)	34%	43%	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>104</b>

<b>Affordable Units Needed:</b>	<b>59</b>
---------------------------------	-----------

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; Maine State Planning Office; SMRPC

### Housing Needs Analysis, Town of Acton

**County Median Income, 2003: \$48,522**

	Totals	Income Category		
		Very Low	Low	Moderate
% of Median		50%	80%	120%
Maximum Income		\$24,261	\$38,818	\$58,226

Affordable Rental Housing Needs, 2000-2015				
Affordable Gross Rent (@ 30% of Income)		\$607	\$970	\$1,456
% of Total Demand		13%	13%	31%
Rented as % of County Total	27.0%	3.6%	3.4%	8.4%
<b>Total Demand, 2000-2015</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>

Affordable Sale Housing Needs, 2000-2015				
Affordable Monthly Payments (@ 25% of Income)*		\$505	\$809	\$1,213
Affordable Sale Price**		\$80,000	\$127,900	\$191,900
% of Total Demand		13%	13%	31%
Owned as % of County Total	73.0%	9.9%	9.2%	22.7%
<b>Total Demand, 2000-2015</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>

\* Monthly Payments Assume an additional 5-10% goes towards taxes and other costs

\*\* Affordable Sale Price assumes 10% down, 6.5% interest rate, 30-year term

Source: 2000 Census Data; Maine State Housing Authority; SMRPC

The analysis shows a demand of approximately 17 affordable rental units and 44 affordable housing units needed over the next fifteen years.

### **Summary Discussion**

With a median home price of \$153,000 and moderate household income levels, Acton is amongst the least affordable towns in York County to purchase a home. While the town has a high homeownership rate (90%), for those people who don't currently own their home, affordability will be a problem. There are also few year round rentals in town. The town's housing stock is almost entirely single family and contains some of the highest number of seasonal homes in the region. This makes affordability regarding rental units a problem as well. High rental rates are a well documented problem in seasonal or tourist destinations.

However, the actual number of units that might need to be created would seem an accomplishable goal. If the town were to issue 35 permits a year for the next ten years, approximately 35 homes would need to be sold at a price of about \$106,000 or lower to meet the states affordability guidelines. Furthermore the analysis above shows a need for about 51 affordable units being needed in the next 15 years. Regardless of which method is used the town would seem to be positioned -with a few creative strategies to meet these affordable housing goals.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Land Use**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines existing land use patterns in the Town of Acton as a means of understanding the character of its development. It also examines recent development trends in the Town and compares them with the land use objectives of the existing Comprehensive Plan.

#### **Existing Land Use Patterns**

Acton is a primarily rural town, with most of its 37.8 square miles of land (it also contains four square miles of water) comprised of undeveloped land. As of the 2000 Census, its population density was about 57 people per square mile. There is very little commercial development in Acton, as fewer than 200 people work within its boundaries. The existing commercial development in Acton is mostly in the Route 109 corridor, especially in the area between the Shapleigh town line and the Acton Fairgrounds.

Most existing residential development in Acton is located along the shores of its lakes and ponds, although there is significant residential development along the frontages of many rural roads. There are eight large lakes or ponds in Acton: Square Pond, Mousam Lake, Lower Mousam Lake, Great East Lake, Wilson Lake, Horn Pond, Balch Pond, and Loon Pond. According to Emergency/911 records, there are 1,918 housing units within the Town limits (the 2000 Census reports 1,910). Of the existing units, 1,083 (57 percent) are located within 250 feet of one of these eight large water bodies.

In the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, there were three growth areas identified. All three were located near the geographic center of Acton, with the largest being a triangular area around the intersection of Route 109 and Sanborn Road. The other two growth areas identified were smaller rectangular zones along the H Road and around the intersection of Route 109 and Garvin Road. At the present time, however, just 123 units are located in these three areas, or about six percent of all dwelling units in Acton. It should be pointed out that the actual implementation of these growth areas (via zoning changes) never occurred. Residents in the early 90's were not in favor of increasing density in the "village" area of Acton (or anywhere else).

Aside from units in the growth areas and along major water bodies, there are another 712 existing residential units in Acton, representing 37 percent of all units in the Town.

These units mainly front on the Town's rural roads, with the greatest numbers being located along Fox Ridge Road, Milton Mills Road, Acton Ridge Road.

The table to the right and the map on the following page

**Existing Residential Units in Acton, 2002**

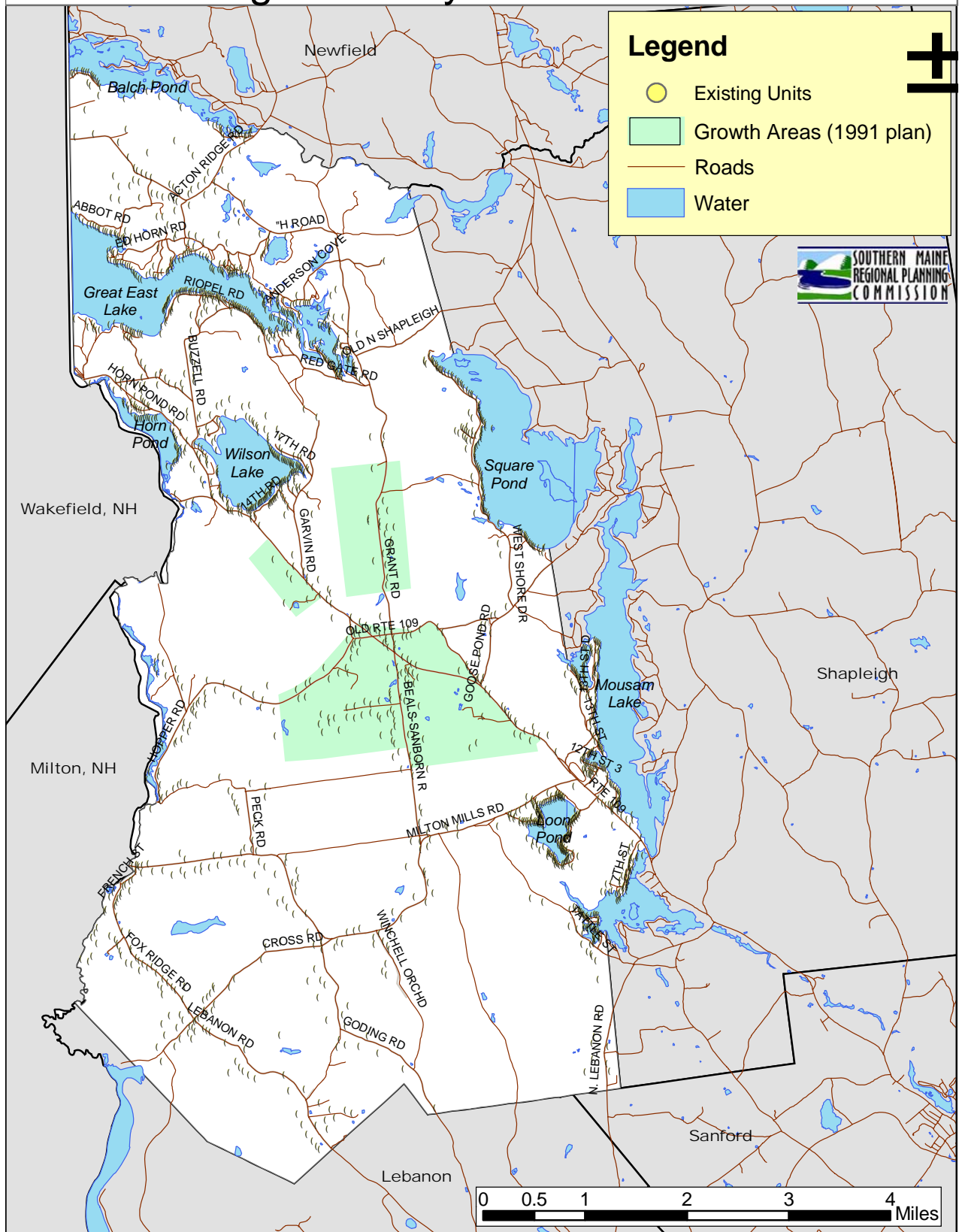
	<b>In Growth Areas</b>	<b>Within 250 Feet of Large Water Bodies*</b>	<b>Not In Growth Areas or Shore Areas</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	123	1,083	712	1,918
<b>Percent</b>	6.4%	56.5%	37.1%	

\* Eight Large Water Bodies are: Mousam Lake, Lower Mousam Lake, Square Pond, Great East Lake, Wilson Lake, Horn Pond, Balch Pond, and Loon Pond.

Source: Town of Acton; SMRPC

# Town of Acton Comprehensive Plan Update

## Existing Inventory of Residential Units



# ACTON Lands Not Readily Available For Development

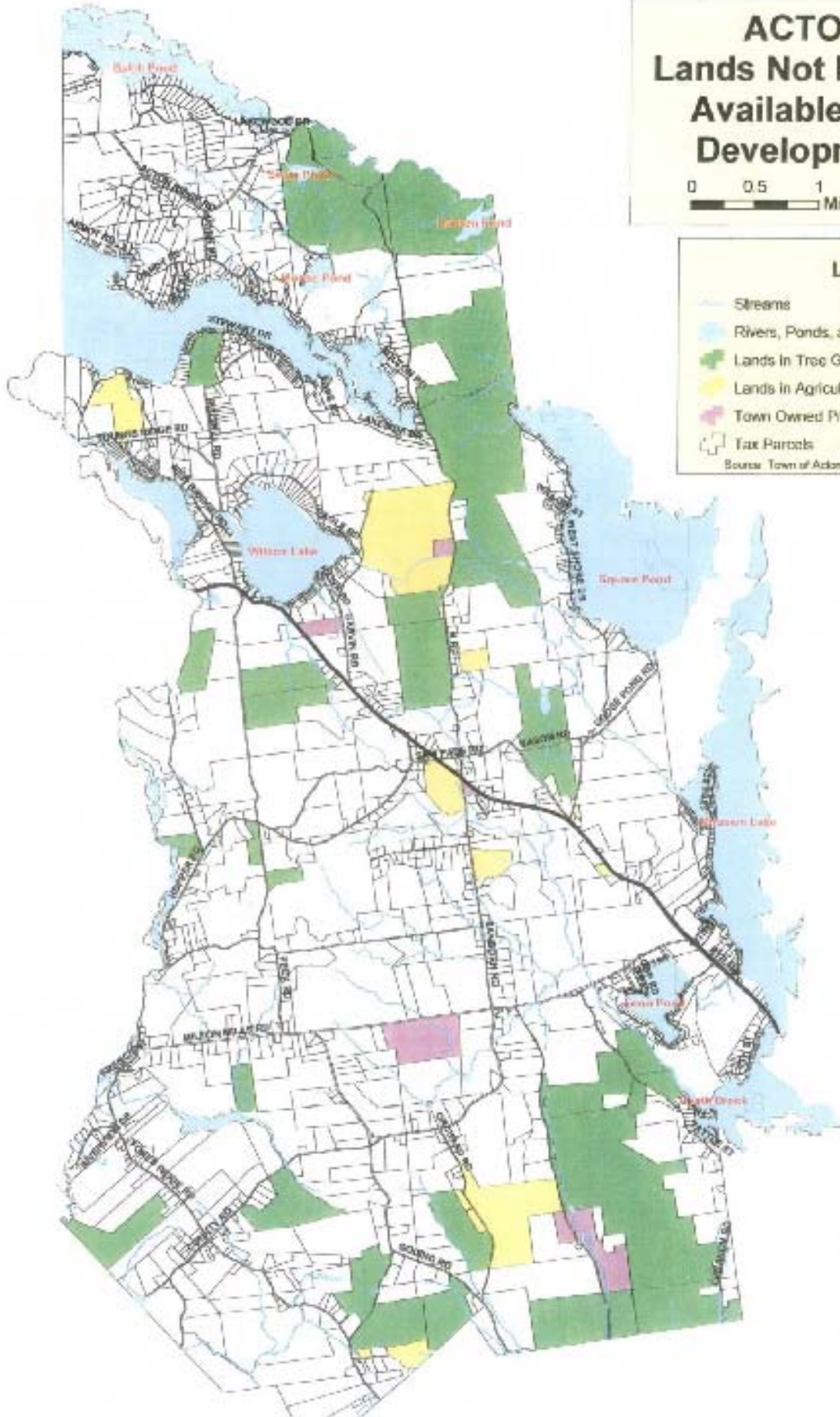


0 0.5 1  
Miles

## Legend

- Streams
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- Lands in Tree Growth (Current Use Program)
- Lands in Agriculture (Current Use Program)
- Town Owned Property
- Tax Parcels

Source: Town of Acton and Maine Office of GIS



Prepared  
by the  
Southern  
Maine  
Regional  
Planning  
Commission  
For planning purposes  
only. Roads, waterbodies  
& streams courtesy of  
Maine Office of GIS.





summarize where existing residential development in Acton is located

### **Recent Development Trends**

Since 1991, there have been a total of 286 residential building permits issued in the Town of Acton, an average of about 24 per year. This increment of new construction represents about 15 percent of all housing units in the Town. Among the permits issued since 1991, 33 were issued in one of the three designated growth areas from the 1991 plan, representing just 12 percent of new development. Another 64 units (22 percent) were built within 250 feet of one of Acton's eight large water bodies.

The remaining 189 units (66 percent) were outside of these two areas, with much of this activity scattered throughout the southern part of the Town. Even most waterfront development took place in the northern part of Acton, primarily around Wilson Lake, Balch Pond, and Great East Lake. These trends demonstrate how the more developed waterfront areas (Square Pond, Mousam Lake, and Lower Mousam Lake) have fewer lots on which to build, and new home development is moving elsewhere. In some respects these lake areas have been the town growth zones. Now, as they have been built out, growth is trending to other areas in town. It would appear to support the notion that the uniform two acre zoning provision for the community is leading to a dispersion of the housing units and population in Acton.

The bulk of new development has been on individual frontage lots, rather than in subdivisions, according to Acton's Code Enforcement Officer. With the exception of the Ridge, a 46-lot subdivision begun in the early 1990s, almost all new development in Acton since 1990 has either occurred on individual lots or in subdivisions of three to four lots. However, subdivision activity has begun to increase, and the CEO expects to receive several applications for new subdivisions in 2004. There are currently three new subdivision proposals totaling 40 new proposed subdivision lots in front of the Acton Planning Board. These are spread throughout the rural parts of town.

One notable land use issue that has recently arisen has been the sale of the former Lavalley Timber lands to a private individual. Much if not all of that land was in tree growth (an area totaling about 900 acres spread in both the northern and southern parts of town). The owner has already approached the Board with a 14 lot proposal for some of these lands and has stated he will likely come in with additional projects following the harvesting of these parcels. So while the town currently has about 3,800 acres in Tree Growth, that is likely to be reduced significantly over the coming years.

The town also has approximately 440 acres in the Farmland Program, mainly associated with the orchards which once thrived in Acton. These orchards, as with other orchards in Maine are suffering from competition abroad and within the US. The location of both Tree Growth and Farmland parcels can be seen on the Lands Not Readily Available for Development Map.

The table below summarizes where residential growth has taken place in Acton over the past decade.

**Residential Building Permits in Acton, 1991-2002**

Year	In Growth Areas	Within 250 Feet of Large Water Bodies*	Not In Growth Areas or Shore Areas	Total	Distribution		
					In Growth Areas	Near Water Bodies	Neither
1991	2	8	21	31	6.5%	25.8%	67.7%
1992	3	6	15	24	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%
1993	1	3	6	10	10.0%	30.0%	60.0%
1994	2	8	14	24	8.3%	33.3%	58.3%
1995	1	1	13	15	6.7%	6.7%	86.7%
1996	1	3	18	22	4.5%	13.6%	81.8%
1997	2	8	19	29	6.9%	27.6%	65.5%
1998	1	3	6	10	10.0%	30.0%	60.0%
1999	3	13	14	30	10.0%	43.3%	46.7%
2000	6	2	18	26	23.1%	7.7%	69.2%
2001	5	3	17	25	20.0%	12.0%	68.0%
2002	6	6	28	40	15.0%	15.0%	70.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>66.1%</b>

\* Eight Large Water Bodies are: Mousam Lake, Lower Mousam Lake, Square Pond, Great East Lake, Wilson Lake, Horn Pond, Balch Pond, and Loon Pond.

Source: Town of Acton; SMRPC

Analysis based on 1991 approved and unimplemented plan.

A critical component of land use is the developability of the town as far as soils, slopes, wetlands, critical natural areas, and what areas have been developed already. SMRPC conducted a Land Use Suitability Analysis to determine what area in town might be most suitable for low intensity growth areas and rural areas.

The map is shown following the map on recent building permit activity. The Chart below summarizes Acton’s growth potential (with an explanation of how the data was derived):

**Developable Lands Data**

Development Constraints (includes hydric soils, steep slopes, conservation lands, wetlands, floodplains, shoreland areas, and areas with existing dwellings). For the purposes of this analysis any existing dwelling was buffered with a two acre ring and then deducted from the developable area).	15,000 acres
Developable Land (land remaining after all the above are mapped)	11,000 acres

Town of Acton acreage	26,000 acres (discrepancies result between the total acreage of the town here and from other data due to differences in town tax maps, USGS maps and water bodies).
-----------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What this analysis shows (and what is graphically represented on the following Map is that the town has approximately 11,000 acres of growth potential. With a two-acre minimum lot size the town has the potential to add anywhere between 5,000 to 6,000 housing units if full build out were realized. As important potentially, is where any growth may go. Based on the land available for development (seen on the map) it might go into some of the more remote parts of town. The uniform nature of the towns zoning map and ordinance would seem to represent a threat to the towns rural areas, character, wildlife habitat and ultimately the finances of Acton as it attempts to provide services to a dispersed population. In the land use policy section the idea of directing growth to a center is looked at in more detail.

An analysis of how the land is constrained from development is shown in the following table. One area that Acton lags behind other communities (such as Waterboro and Shapleigh) is land constrained because of conservation holdings or easements.

### **Breakdown of Constraints**

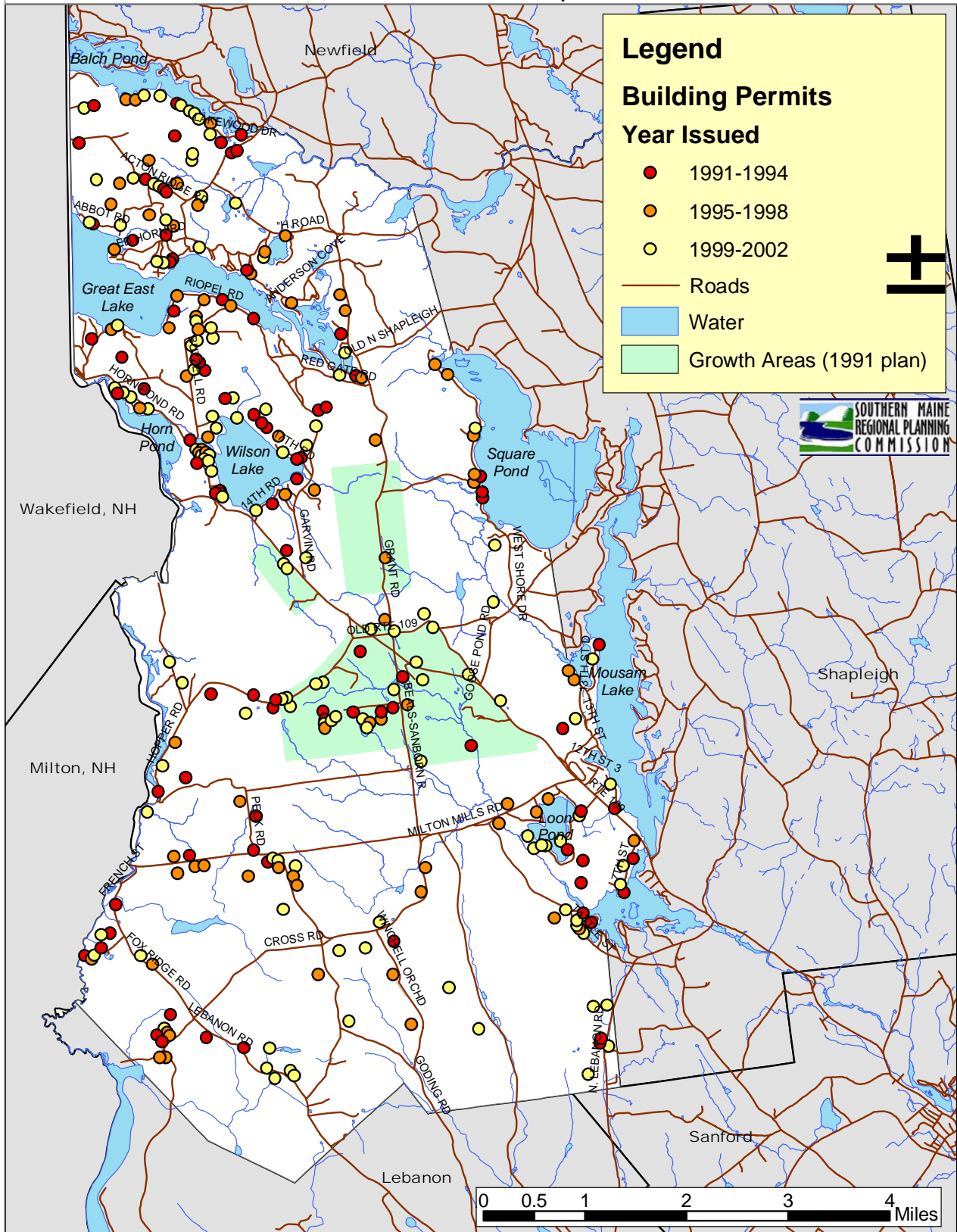
(Approximate amounts)

Public Lands	272 acres
Two acre buffer of residential dwellings	2,300 acres
Environmental Constraints	12,400

Commercial growth has been limited in the town with the exception of the gas/convenience complex near the Acton fairgrounds. This was in fact the only permitted commercial project in Acton in the past decade. Based on the small survey conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Committee there appears to be no real desire for large scale commercial and/or industrial growth. There does appear to be some support for small commercial ventures which support local residents (possibly places such a hardware stores, small markets, pharmacies and the like). Currently Acton allows commercial ventures throughout the town according to the provisions of a “floating commercial zone”. There is a concern that this provision, combined with relatively weak performance standards for commercial uses (such as for parking, landscaping, etc) leave the town and its rural character at risk.. Essentially, one can build a commercial (or industrial) structure nearly anywhere in Acton.

# Town of Acton Comprehensive Plan Update

## Residential Permits, 1991-2002



# ACTON Developable Land

N

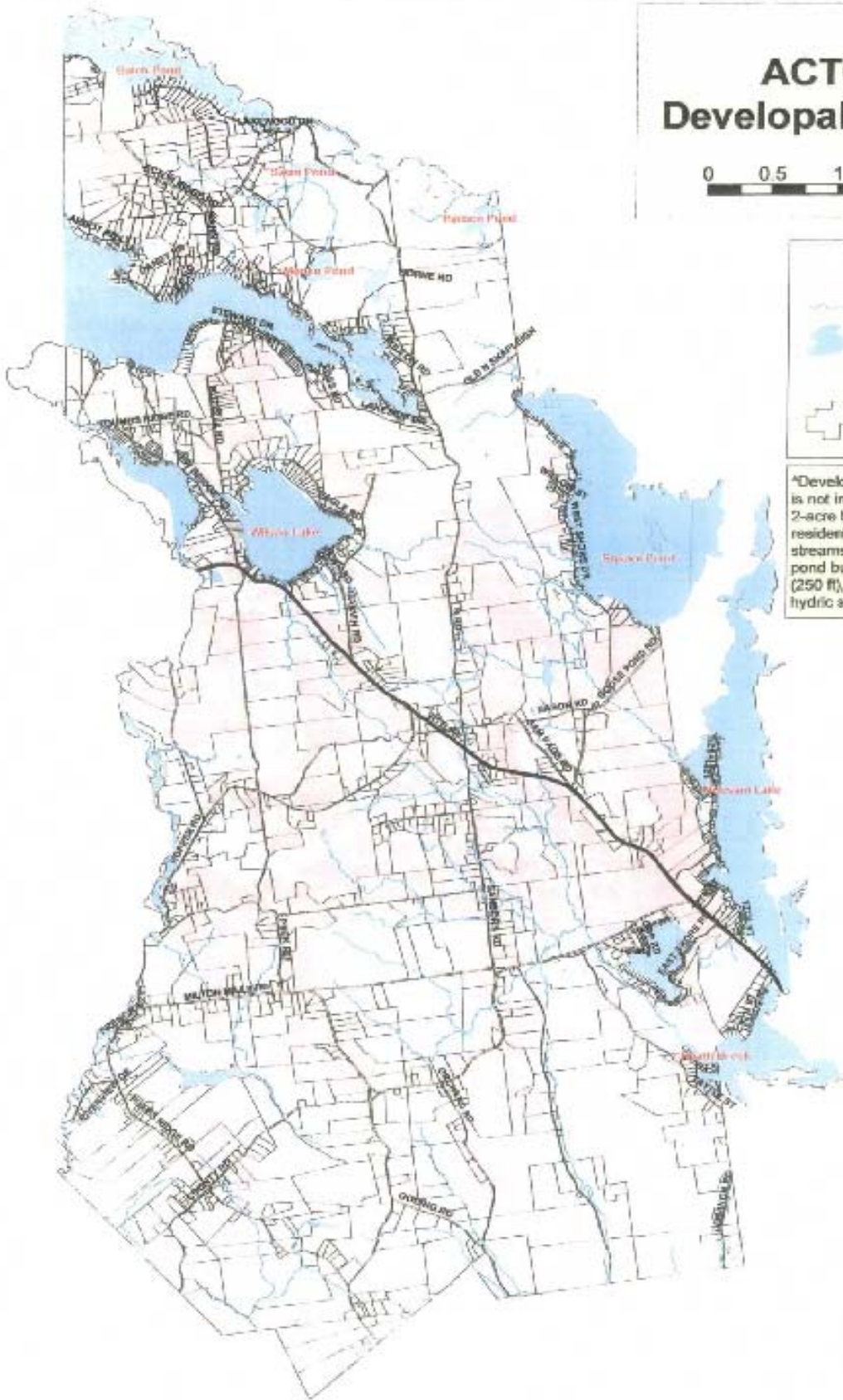


0 0.5 1 2 Miles

## Legend

- Streams
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- Developable Land\*
- Tax Parcels

\*Developable Land includes all land that is not in public ownership, within a 2-acre buffer surrounding existing residential locations, or constrained by streams, stream buffers (75 ft), ponds, pond buffers (250 ft), rivers, river buffers (250 ft), wetlands, 100-year floodplain, hydric soils, steep slopes and wetlands.



Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission  
 For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



## **Summary Discussion**

The absence of an adopted growth plan for Acton makes an analysis of land use difficult. While some growth occurred near the so called “town center” it was very small as compared to the remainder of the town. Aside from the development around the lakesides, the town has grown in a somewhat random manner. It seems clear that as the lake areas build out the next round of growth will likely occur elsewhere.

It is possible that based on recent activity this growth may take place in more rural parts of the town –where vast holdings of timberlands and fairly inexpensive land may contribute to growth in these areas. With affordable housing being an issue countywide (and in Acton), low cost rural lots become more desirable. This may result in small subdivisions arising in these areas – perhaps on town maintained gravel roads. It is clear that there is growing subdivision activity in the town – particularly as the growth from coastal areas proceeds inland.

Without water and sewer to focus growth the town needs to be creative as it seeks to guide growth. The towns existing growth cap, while providing a limit on overall growth does not guide growth. It also appears that as road frontage is built out more development may take place on back lands and off right of ways. This has implications for emergency services and future town road decisions.

The vast majority of town growth occurs outside the subdivision review process. This may change slightly in the coming years. However dealing with the cumulative impacts of lot by lot growth (rather than large scale subdivisions) is a much more difficult issue to resolve.

Commercial development in town is limited to an area round the Acton fairgrounds and along Rte. 109 at the Potting Shed. A couple of convenience stores have been developed near the lake areas. The idea behind the “floating” commercial and industrial area has not resulted in any new commercial/industrial development.

These issues will be discussed more fully in the Goals and Policies section for land use.

## Chapter IV

### Significant and Critical Natural Resources

Acton contains a number of critical natural resource features which all help to define the rural nature of the community and demonstrate its biodiversity. This information is now more comprehensive than the previous plan due to the work of the Beginning with Habitat Project sponsored by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) and the Maine Natural Areas Program.

#### Land Trust Focus Areas

Through a cooperative program of MDIFW, MNAP and the Maine Audubon Society a series of maps and presentations were made throughout southern Maine detailing the presence of so-called Land Trust Focus Areas. These focus areas are essentially areas which contain a number of rare and/or endangered plants or animals, their habitat, form a natural community and are of a size large enough to maintain a diverse population of species.

The South Acton Swamps were noted in the Southern Maine Land Trust Focus Area guidebook prepared by MNAP. The general location of the South Acton Swamps is shown on the Plant and Animal Locations and Habitat Map. The area is a series of moderately broad basins containing 250 acres of forested wetlands along with a number of marshes and open water systems. The variety of wetlands creates a wide diversity of plant and animal habitats, which includes:

- Mixed graminoid – shrub marsh natural community: A heterogeneous wetland type in which herbs and shrubs occur in various assemblages
- Unpatterned fen ecosystem: Fens are peatlands in which groundwater or water from adjacent uplands moves through the area. Plants are exposed to more nutrients and the vegetation is more diverse than a bog. Consists primarily of grasses, sedges, reeds and sphagnum.
- Stream-shore ecosystem – A group of communities bordering and directly influenced by the open water portion of a stream and including vegetated aquatic communities as well as the emergent and bordering communities.

#### WILDLIFE

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) , the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP), the State Planning Office and Maine Audubon have recently finished a GIS compilation of existing data regarding wildlife habitat and rare and endangered species locations in Acton. A description of this data and it's use can be found in the guide entitled Beginning with Habitat. In sum the data illustrates the following:

1. The importance of riparian habitat along streams, brooks, rivers, and associated wetlands. These areas function as tremendous travel corridors for wildlife and most importantly contain 75% of all the species diversity in Maine. To some degree,

these areas are protected by Shoreland Zoning. The extent of that protection is much debated.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife consider these riparian areas the backbone of any wildlife preservation effort.

2. The wide range of high value plant and animal habitat within the community. The consortium of agencies denoted above have highlighted the ecological diversity of the town with mapping of; deer wintering areas; assemblages of rare plants, animals and natural communities found within the town; “essential” wildlife habitats which requires IFW review for endangered animals and their habitat; and “significant wildlife habitat” (such as high and moderate value waterfowl or wading bird habitat). These areas are found on the Plant and Animal Locations and Habitat Map.
3. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the identification of large relatively unbroken blocks of habitat which can support animals with large home ranges (such as moose and fishers) as opposed to suburban species (such raccoons and skunks). These unfragmented blocks offer valuable opportunities to preserve a wide range of species in a rapidly developing landscape. The implications for wildlife diversity in the face of “sprawl” in these locations may be an important planning concern. Many of these unfragmented blocks also cross town boundaries.

Two large unfragmented blocks of habitat occur in the town. One is large block that is seen in the southwestern part of Acton and extending into Lebanon (and actually includes the South Acton Swamps). The other is in the southeastern part of town and also extends into Lebanon. These areas play key roles in the biodiversity of the town and are also areas that nearly entirely undeveloped.

Additionally the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) has also developed wildlife habitat data which is also on file with the town. This map is also found on the following page. This data essentially predicts the habitat for the USFW trust species for the region. The data includes both upland habitat and coastal habitat. The maps for this modeled data is also included with the maps in the “Beginning with Habitat” guidebook.

### Rare and Endangered Plant and Animal Species

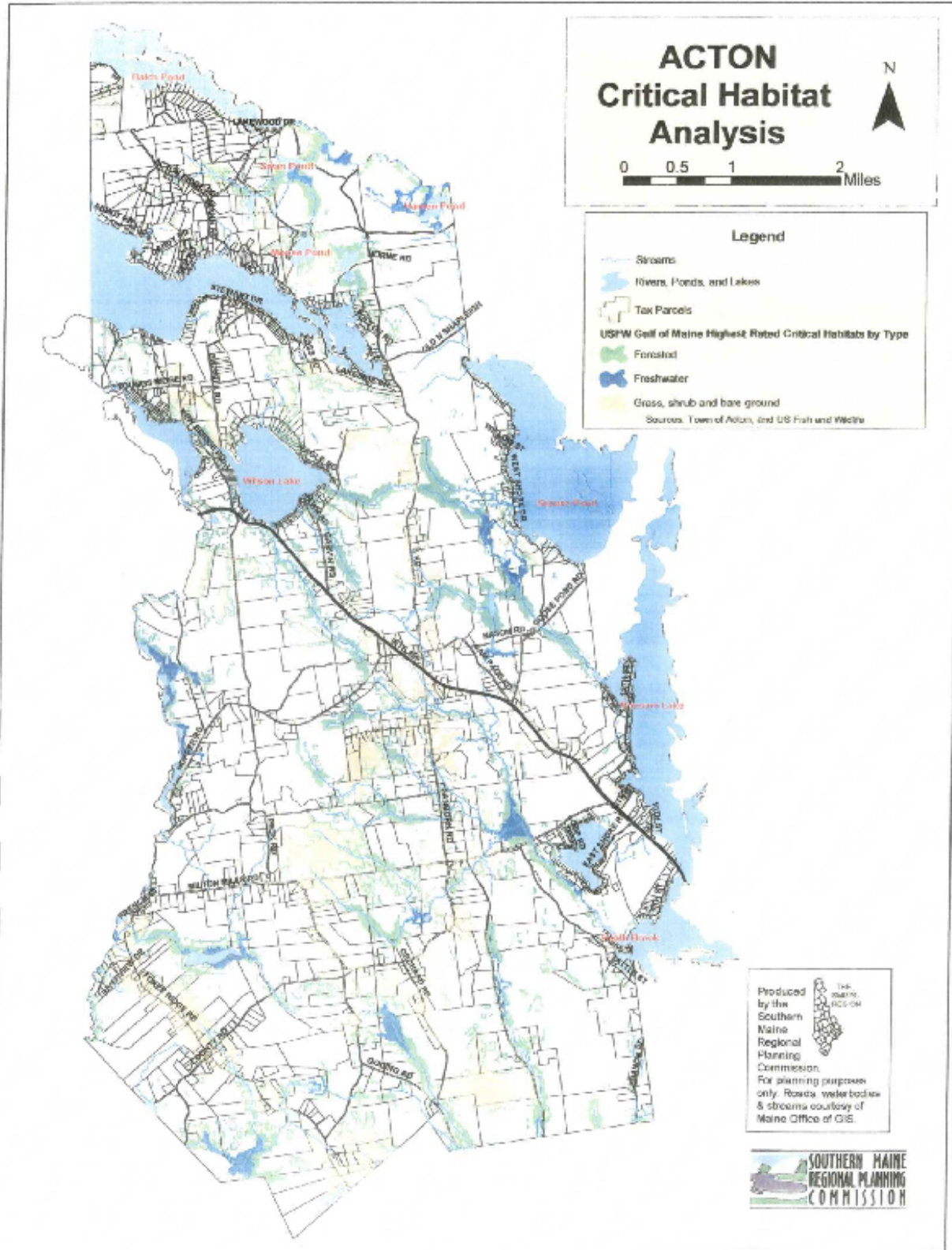
The areas listed above also contain individual endangered plant and animal species. These include:

- Blandings turtle a state endangered species
- Ribbon snakes, a species of special concern
- State endangered spotted wintergreen plant
- Swamp saxifrage, a species of special concern

In other portions of town, additional rare and endangered plant and animals can be found as follows:

- Wood Turtle, a species of special concern





- White wood aster, a state threatened species
- Sweet pepper bush, species of special concern
- Spicebush a species of special concern
- Ram's head lady slippers, an endangered species
- Small whorled pagonia, an endangered species

The point locations of these species are located on the Plant and Animal Location Map. For the purposes of this section we have not identified the specific species with the actual location. However, it important to note the general location as applications come in for possible development review.

While Acton currently has cluster development provisions within their ordinances, it has been underutilized by the town (also due to the fact there has not been a lot of development activity). There has been an interest in better using open space development methods to protect these resources, particularly as there are now two land trusts operating in the region.

#### Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat

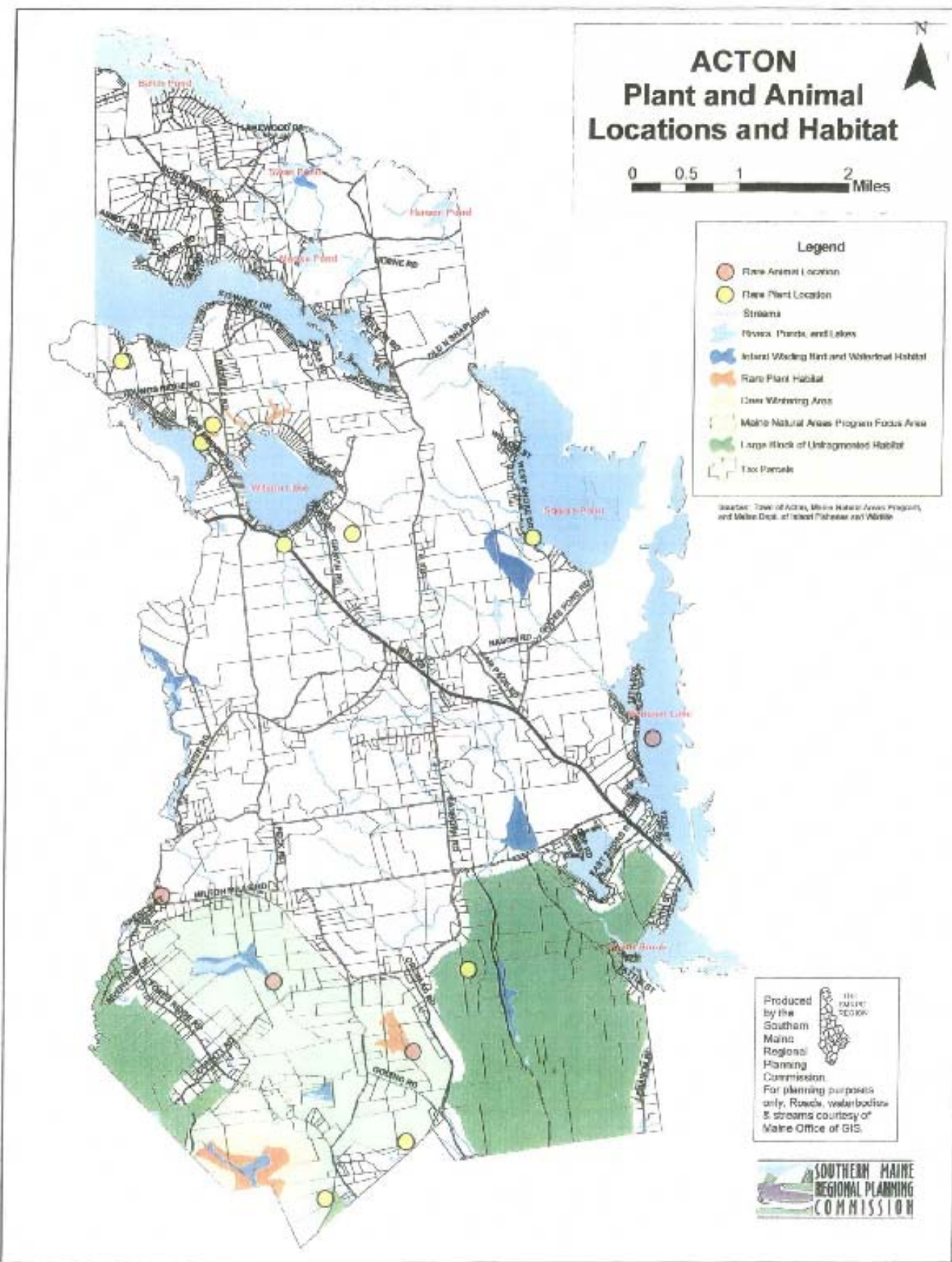
The area of the South Acton Swamp also contains a noteworthy Deer Wintering area as mapped by MDIFW. Deer wintering areas are heavily vegetated areas where deer tend to winter over due to the undeveloped nature of the area as well as the dense tree cover (and possibly lower snow depths).

Acton also has several notable Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat locations as mapped by MDIFW (seen on the Plant and Animal Location and Habitat Map. These are areas fairly spread out through the town and are comprised mainly of larger freshwater wetlands. Many are also found along the Salmon Falls River.

The many ponds, lakes and streams of Acton do provide year round recreational fishing opportunities.

#### Scenic Resources

The 1991 Plan listed a number of scenic vistas and views. These included looking east off Route 109 near the Potting Shed; the view up Mousam Lake near the town line; a view of Mt. Washington from Milton Mills Rd. at Hurd's Hill; the scenic drive along the Salmon Falls River on Hopper Rd; the vistas of South Acton and New Hampshire from on top of Farnham's Hill and from the drive on Fox Ridge at School house Hill; views of surrounding areas from Blueberry Hill Farm; vistas from Hurd's Hill looking west; and panoramic views from Hussey Hill. These views and others developed through a facilitated meeting of the Three Rivers Land Trust are on file with the maps of the Land Trust and are also on file at the Town Office.



# ACTON Plant and Animal Locations and Habitat

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

**Legend**

- Rare Animal Location
- Rare Plant Location
- Streams
- ▭ Ponds, Ponds, and Lakes
- ▭ Inland Wetland and Waterbody Habitat
- ▭ Rare Plant Habitat
- ▭ Deer Viewing Area
- ▭ Maine Natural Areas Program Focus Area
- ▭ Large Block of Undeveloped Habitat
- ▭ Tax Parcels

Source: Town of Acton, Maine Natural Areas Program, and Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



It has become clear through discussions at these Land Trust meetings that scenic views and vistas play an important role in what people view as the rural character of the community. In fact many of the resources denoted as being valuable on the local level (through the visioning sessions for the Three Rivers Land Trust) included scenic vistas. For the most part these resources hold no special designation within the town which would provide protection, except through some type of cluster development approach.

### Wetland Resources

The National Wetlands Inventory is the best source of data currently available for wetland locations in the town. It is shown on the following page.

Freshwater wetlands have many uses. A recent study by the Maine State Planning Office and others, entitled, "Casco Bay Watershed Wetlands Characterization", helps to better define the value for particular wetlands both within and outside of watershed. This characterization can be accomplished through a relatively straightforward GIS mapping process. The study identified the following key values and functions for wetlands which need to be considered as the town examine its wetland and resource protection rules.

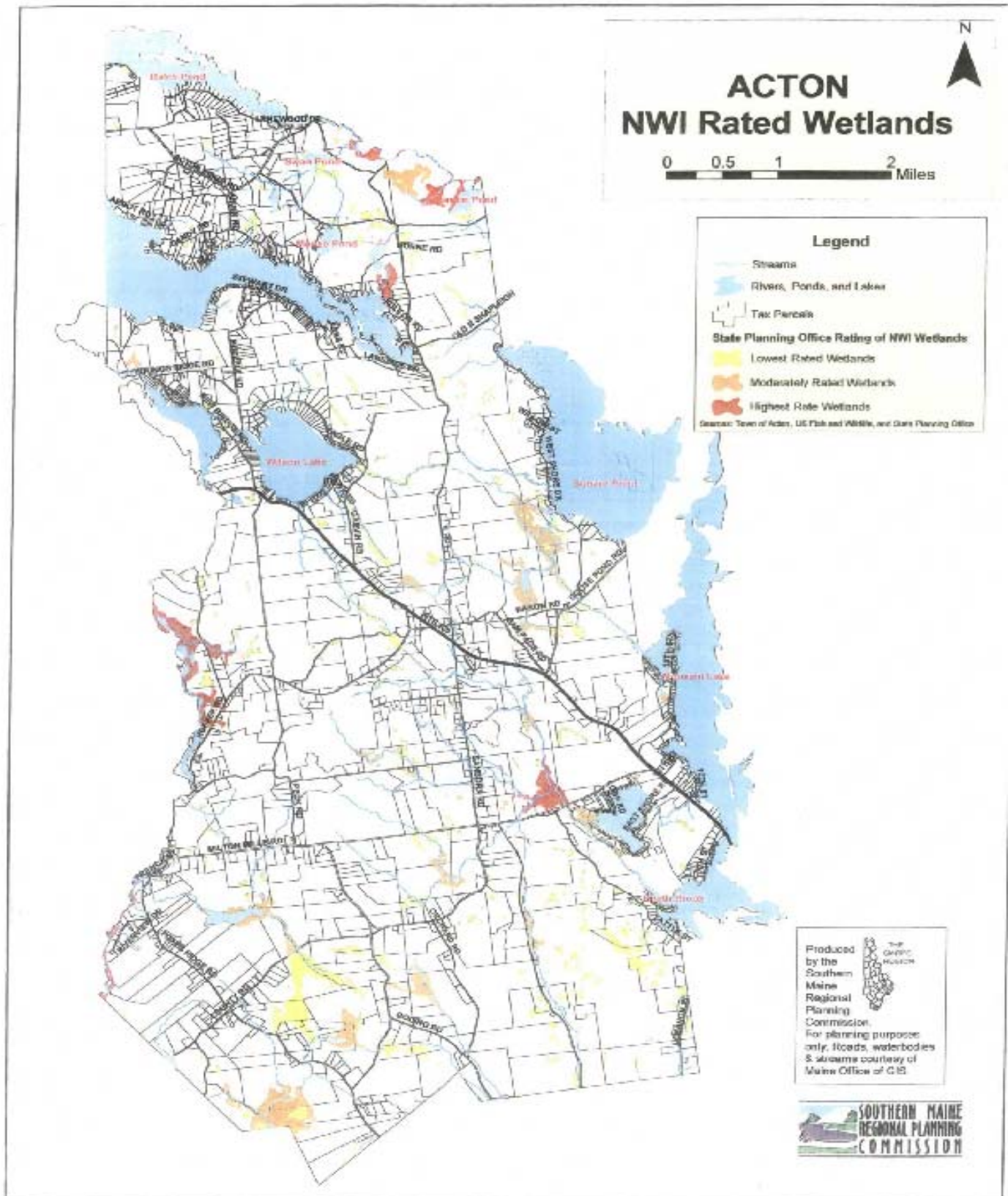
- Hydrologic Functions
- Biogeochemical functions
- Biological Functions
- Cultural values

Hydrologic functions are primarily concerned with flood flows and the process by which peak flows are stored and delayed in their journey downstream. In this regards wetlands perform a critical function in the storing and release of waters during storm events. The biogeochemical function is the process by which wetlands may trap sediment in runoff from uplands and help prevent water quality downstream. The biological function is related to the potential fro the wetland to provide habitat for certain species that rely on wetlands for some part of their life cycle including finfish, shellfish and other flora/fauna. Finally, the cultural values of wetlands are those represented by the educational and recreational value (bird watching, nature study) of the wetland.

The prioritization of these wetlands and their value can be seen as an appendix to the book entitled "Beginning with Habitat", and the relative ranking of some of these wetlands can be seen on the National Wetlands Inventory Map. Wetlands with ratings of three or higher have been broken out to highlight their potential functions (wetlands with a rating of greater than three are considered significant for three of the four functions described above).

### Soils

The development potential of any area is largely based on soils. Soil types vary widely in Acton from one part o town to the next. Some are gravel based, some are deep loam and some are rocky or full of clay.



In the absence of a municipal sewer system in Acton these soil types serve an important role in evaluating growth potential within the town. Justifiably, concerns arise with the placement of high density housing in areas served by private on site septic disposal. In general wet soils and steep slopes cause the most concern when locating new septic systems. In that regard, the Hydric Soils Map, displays areas with hydric soils (soils classified by the Soil Conservation Service as containing water at or near the ground surface). The mapped area of these soils combined with other environmental constraints (seen on the Building Constraints Map) can help the town envision their areas suitable for growth.

For the most part, concerns about septic systems and water quality revolve around nitrate loading to wells. EPA has set a standard of 10mg/l for nitrates for well water. Many hydrogeologists however suggest planning for a standard of 5mg/l as a buffer against merely planning to meet the standard.

The 1991 plan outlined the following in regards to the interrelationships of minimum lots sizes, soil types and rainfall.

**Table 1: Minimum lot size (in acres) necessary for nitrate dilution to 10 mg/l, initial concentration 30 mg/l**

<u>Soil type</u>	<u>Average Conditions</u>	<u>Drought Conditions</u>
Sand and gravel	0.4	0.6
Sandy till/rocky	1.0	1.7
Thick silty till	1.4	2.3

**Table 2: Minimum lot size (in acres) necessary for nitrate dilution to 5mg/l, initial concentration 40 mg/l.**

<u>Soil type</u>	<u>Average Conditions</u>	<u>Drought Conditions</u>
Sand and gravel	1.0	1.6
Sandy till/rock	2.8	4.6
Thick silty till	3.9	6.3

Source: Robert Gerber, Inc.





Another option for examining development potential might be to highlight the areas that highly rated for placement of septic systems (and in line with the above table). These soils would correspond to the guide “Soil Potential Ratings for Low Density Development in York County, Maine, 1989”. The areas that are rated high or very high are shown on Soils Suitable for Septic Systems Map. If the town does wish to designate

# ACTON Hydric Soils

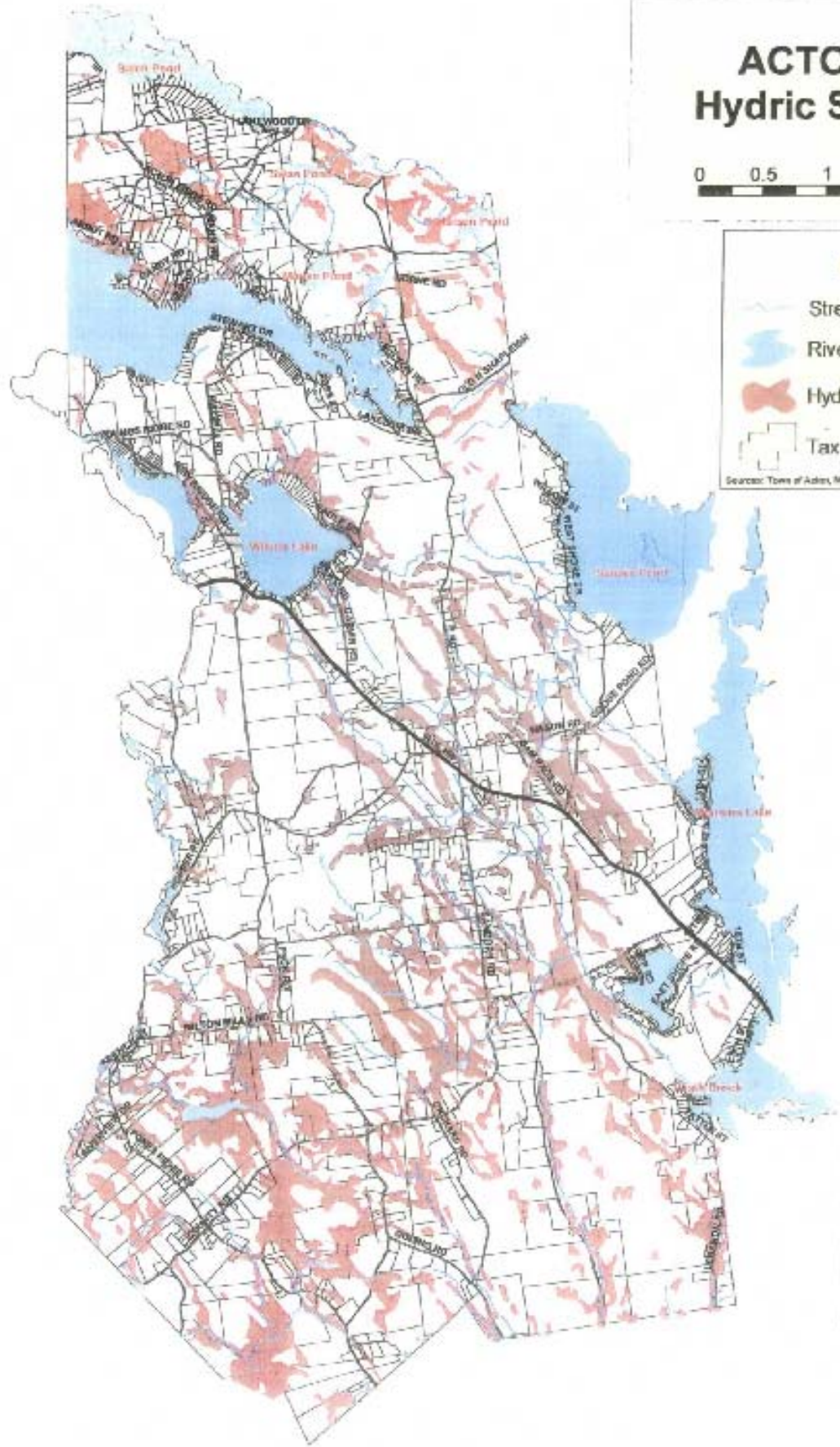


0 0.5 1 2 Miles

## Legend

-  Streams
-  Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
-  Hydric Soils
-  Tax Parcels

Sources: Town of Acton, Maine Office of GIS, and US Dept of Agriculture.



Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



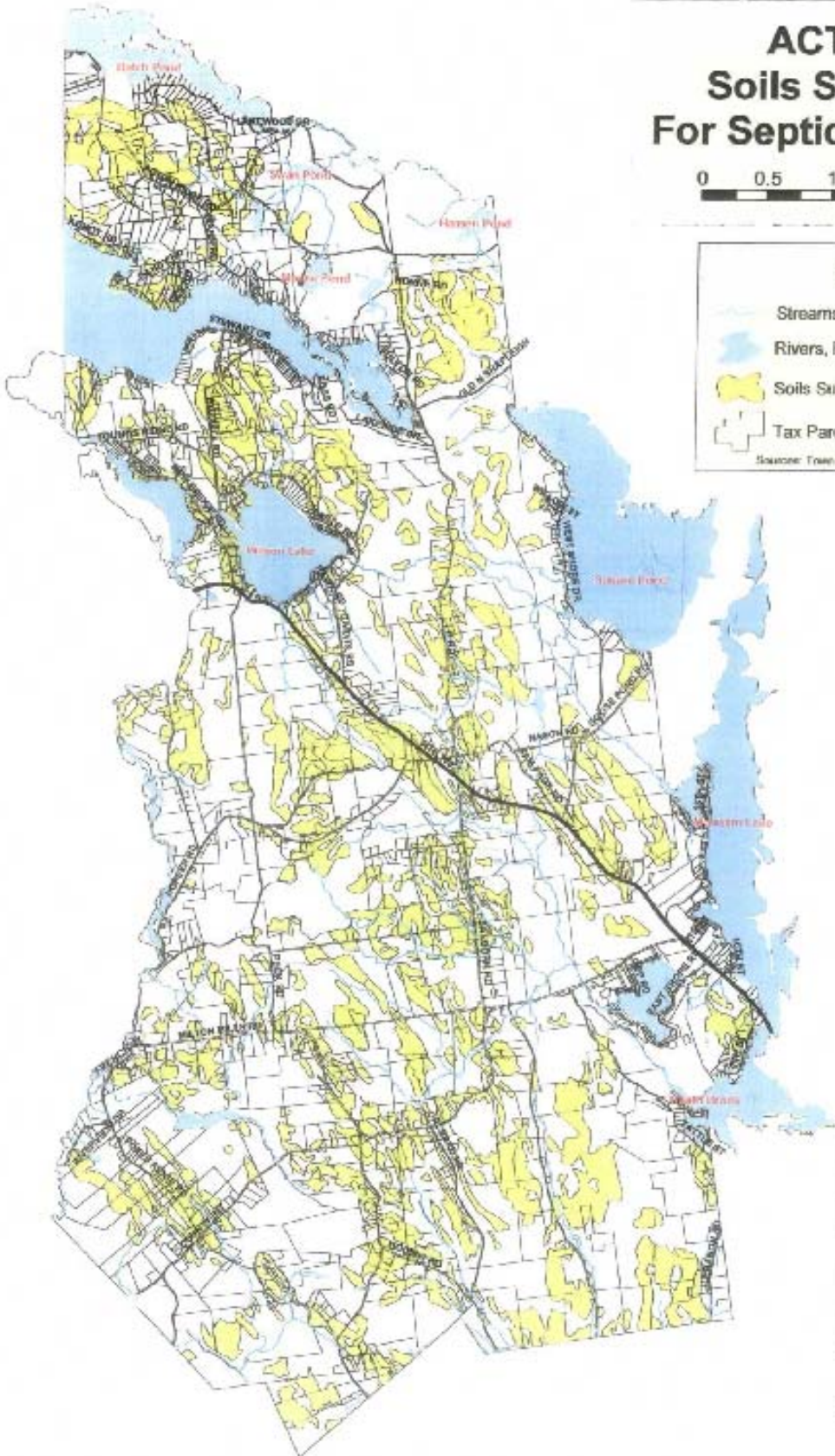
# ACTON Soils Suitable For Septic Systems



**Legend**

- Streams
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- Soils Suitable For Septic Systems
- Tax Parcels

Source: Town of Acton, and Dept. of Agriculture



Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission.

For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.





an area for lot sizes more dense than 2 acres these areas might be appropriate (considering other factors as well).

### Forest Resources

Acton is a community rich in timberland and timberland potential. A large percentage of the town contains soils good for growing timber. These areas include much of Hubbard's Ridge and Acton Ridge; along Milton Mill's Road; the flats between Wilson and Great East Lakes and along the Salmon Falls River. However these soils are also areas that are more easily developed.

One way to gauge the status of forestry in Acton is to look at the lands which have been placed in the "Tree Growth" tax program. In 1990, 442 acres were listed as Tree Growth parcels/acreage. By 2003, this number had grown dramatically to over 3,500 acres. This acreage in Tree Growth represents 14% of the town's total acreage of 24,192 acres. Many of these timberlands are held by single property owners or trusts. There does not seem to be any long term sustainable forestry programs taking place on any of these parcels. The sale of the Lavalley timber lands to Robert Libby (approximately 900 acres), changed the outlook for long term forest lands in Acton as some of these properties are now being subdivided for recreational and seasonal purposes. One Libby parcel is currently being subdivided into 14 house lots – following the harvesting of the entire parcel.

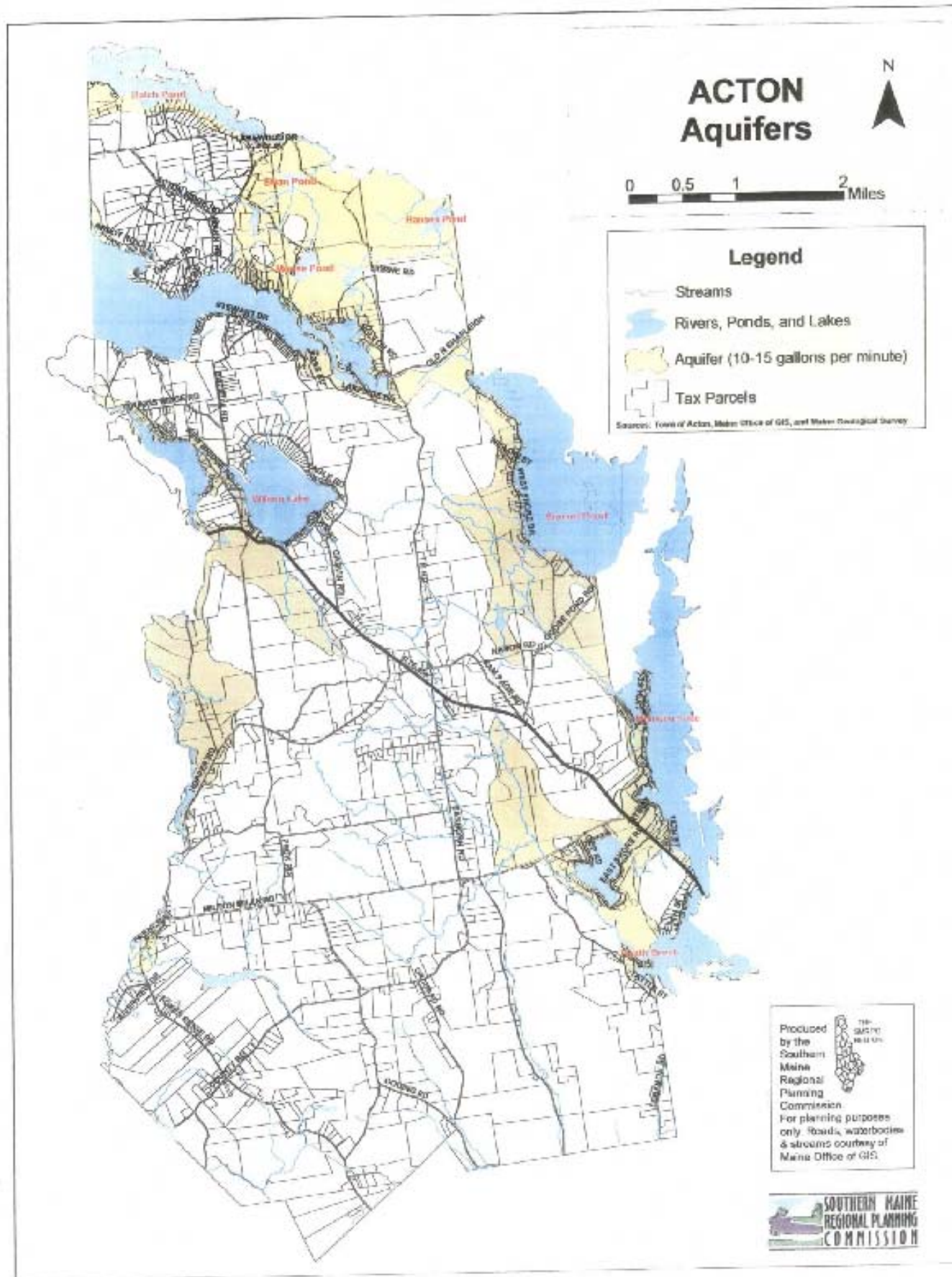
It should also be pointed out that many of the larger Tree Growth parcels form the backbone for the rural landscapes which are noted on the Beginning with Habitat maps of unfragmented blocks of habitat. The location of Tree Growth parcels are seen on the Lands Not Readily Available for Development Map in the Land Use section (Chapter 3).

### Groundwater Resources

While Acton does not currently have a public drinking water supply, it is possible that one might be needed in the future. To that end an analysis of drinking water possibilities can be a valuable assessment as a town begins to grow. In Acton's case the availability of groundwater provides some opportunities and limitations.

The sand and gravel aquifer map demonstrates the opportunities and limitations for a public water source for Acton. The areas mapped may provide up to 50 gallons per minute (gpm) or more. The aquifers appear to be abundant, however they also lie in the most heavily developed portions of town (around the lakefronts). Yet these are also the areas that may in fact need a quality supply of water (due to the prevalence of small lots with on site septic disposal.). The aquifer in the northern part of town (northeast of Great East Lake) is still relatively undeveloped.

In addition a number of possible bedrock aquifers supplying over 50 gpm were identified in the prior Comprehensive Plan. It is interesting to note these possible sources are not as developed as the sand and gravel sites, and a bedrock site may be less susceptible to



contamination. Possible bedrock aquifers are found in both the northern part of town (actually embedded within the sand and gravel aquifer described above), and also in the southern part of town within the large unfragmented block of forest lands seen in the Beginning with Habitat data.

There are three existing public water systems in Acton. Two are located at the Potting Shed Restaurant on Rte. 109 and one is located at the Acton Elementary School. For this plan the Elementary School location poses a possible concern for the town. According to the Maine Department of Human Services Drinking Water program, there is a moderate existing risk of contamination at this well site (as a septic system is within 300 feet of the well) and a high future risk for contamination as the well contains no legal land use controls within 150 foot or greater radius from the well. Additionally, DHS states that the parking lot is within 100 feet of the well site. The town may wish to examine this issue both legislatively and as they begin to look at school expansion issues.

The wells at the Potting Shed hold only a low or moderate risk for contamination.

### Lakes

Acton has an abundance of lakes, including large water bodies such as Mousam Lake, Great East Lake, and Square Pond. Several of these lakes cross the boundaries between Acton and neighboring towns, creating an inter-local planning issue. Lakes provide unsurpassed aesthetic experiences and recreational opportunities. They provide habitat for water birds, birds of prey, fur bearers, and game animals. Lakes are critical to the survival of local and regional fish and wildlife resources.

In Acton, lakeshore properties are a significant portion of the tax base. Intense residential development, agricultural practices, and other activities seriously threaten the water quality of lakes. Every drainage basin in Maine has been affected by “non-point source pollution” that comes from a number of diffuse sources, including construction sites, farms, roads and parking lots, and lawns. When it rains, the run-off may contain nutrients (especially phosphorus), toxics, sediments, and microorganisms. The run-off eventually ends up in our lakes and disturbs the natural balance of organisms in the water. For example, over 50 lakes in Maine have become so rich with phosphorous that they experience prolonged and repeated algae blooms.

The increased phosphorus in the lake acts as a fertilizer to algae, increasing its abundance dramatically and may turn them into green, smelly, murky lakes.

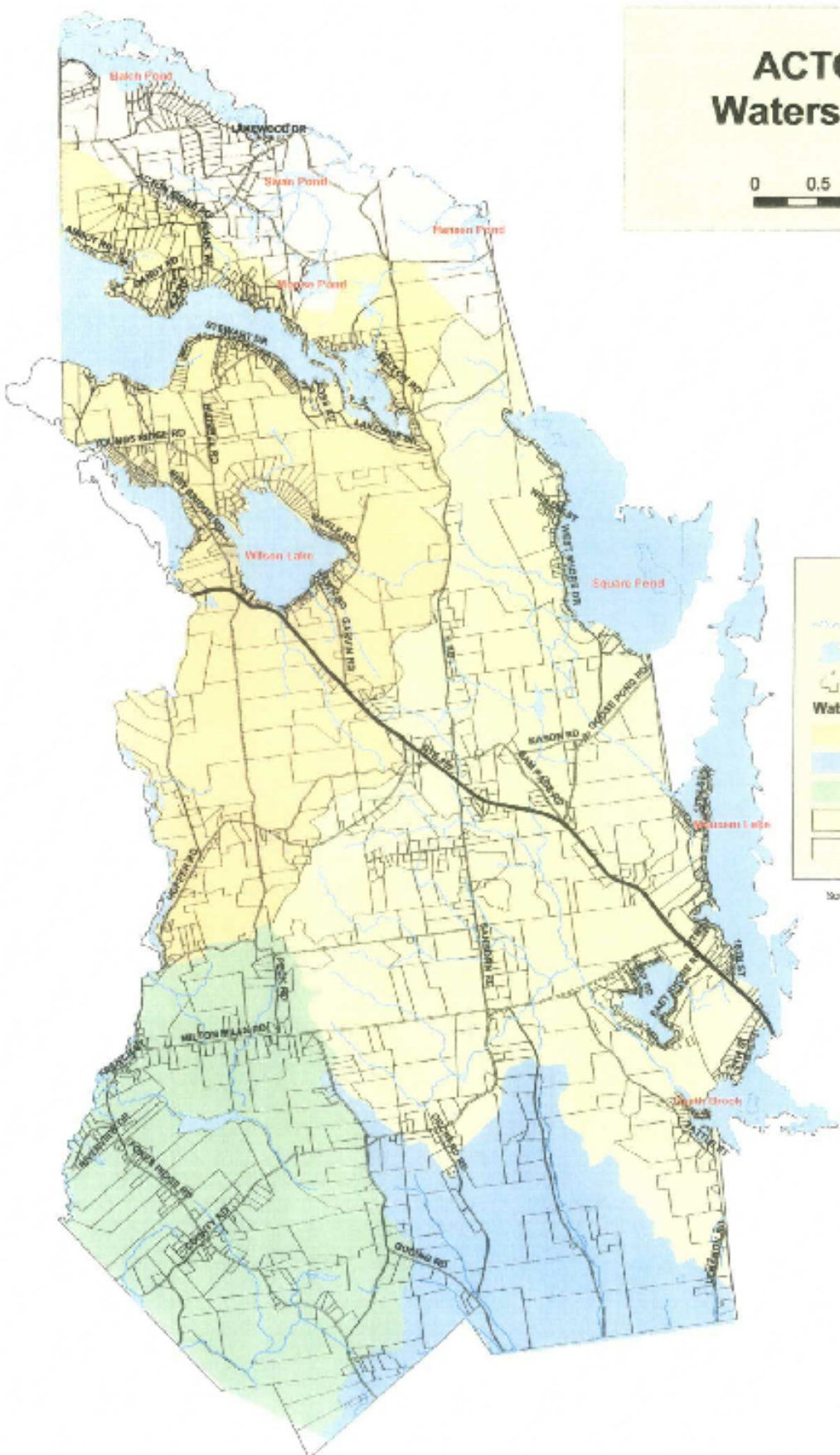
The chart on the following page is based on a program developed by the Lakes Division of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The methodology used is adapted from the manual “Phosphorus Control in Lake Watersheds: A Technical Guide to Evaluating New Development,” which is available from the DEP, or S.M.R.P.C. The program addresses the cumulative impact of development in lake watersheds and the resulting effect on lake water quality.

The key element of this program is the “per acre allocation of phosphorus” for the town’s watersheds. Planning Boards can use this phosphorus allocation to review future

# ACTON Watersheds



0 0.5 1 Miles



### Legend

- Streams
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- Tax Parcels

#### Watershed

- Headwaters-Great East Lake
- Little River
- Milton Pond
- Mousam Lake at Emery Mills
- Shapleigh Pond

Source: Town of Acton and Maine Office of GIS

Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. For planning purposes only. Roads, water/bodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



development and prevent a loss of water quality for the next fifty years. It is suggested that these charts be reviewed every five years to determine if projections of growth are accurate.

### Detailed Descriptions of Lakes and their Watersheds

**Balch Pond:** A 519-acre pond with 7.6 miles of shoreline, Balch Pond is split by the Maine/New Hampshire border. Average depth is relatively shallow, at 12.8 feet. Balch's shoreland is dominated by coarse, sandy soils and steep slopes.

The pond, which lies along the course of the Little Ossipee River, has slightly above average water quality according to DEP. Transparency readings have been relatively stable in recent years at 18 feet, and chlorophyll A and phosphorus readings are moderate and stable. According to DEP's report, lakeshore residents have been concerned about aquatic plants and algae in coves where water movement is restricted by causeways. Balch Pond is heavily developed along most of its shoreline, with several tiers of cottages flanking the shoreline in places.

**Great East Lake:** The largest lake in the area with 1,667 acres of surface, it is also split by the Maine/New Hampshire border. It has 12 miles of shoreline and an average depth of 36 feet.

Two-thirds of the lake are surrounded by coarse sand and gravel deposits. Slope is moderate to steep. According to DEP, water quality is above average, with transparency readings well above average, sometimes exceeding 30 feet. The shoreline is almost fully developed.

**Hansen Pond:** A small pond of 30 acres, 1.2 miles of shoreline, and a relatively shallow maximum depth of 8 feet. The pond is accessible only by one dirt road.

**Horn Pond:** Located on the Maine/New Hampshire border and draining to the Salmon Falls River, Horn Pond has 205 acres of surface water and a maximum depth of 31 feet. Its shoreline is heavily developed on the Acton side of the lake.

**Loon Pond:** It has 94 acres, 1.9 miles of shoreline, and an average depth of 10 feet. It is surrounded by sandy and floodplain soils with moderate slopes. The pond is heavily developed, with two tiers of cottages flanking the shoreline in places.

**Moose Pond:** With only 27 acres, less than a mile of shoreline, and a maximum depth of 20 feet, Moose Pond is surrounded by coarse Colton soils. Its shoreline is only one-third developed.

**Mousam Lake:** It is the source of the Mousam River, with 872 acres of surface water and 15.4 miles of shoreline. While the lake is deep in places, up to 98 feet, the average depth is 21.6 feet. Due to its large watershed, over 29 square miles, the lake flushes itself almost twice a year.

According to DEP, the water quality of Mousam Lake is declining based on Secchi Disk readings, total phosphorous and chlorophyll. Mousam is on the state listing of Maine lakes not attaining water quality standards based on declining trends from the late 80's to current times.

Mousam Lake is supplied by water from several sources. Upstream lakes generally tend to improve water quality for downstream lakes, because sediments and some nutrients settle out of the water into lake sediments. Water from Goose Pond drains into Mousam Lake. In addition, since the watersheds of Pump Box Brook and other streams feeding the lake are largely undeveloped, these sources can supply the lake with relatively pristine water.

Mousam Lake's watershed is dominated by sandy soils, with occasional organic soils. All of these soils have limitations which should be considered as development takes place. Steep areas exist throughout the watershed, including the immediate shoreland. Over 90% of Mousam Lake's shoreline exceeds 8 slope, with many areas exceeding 15. Steeply sloped areas dominated by loose Adams and Colton soils are quite vulnerable to erosion and are a concern from a water quality standpoint. Soil particles eroding into lakes carry phosphorus.

As lakeshore property rises in value, so do marginal lands, including steeply sloped areas which are costly to develop. Some lots with slopes over 30 have been clearcut almost to the shoreline to create or improve views. Most of the available shoreline around Mousam Lake has been developed. In places, the shoreline has been significantly altered to enable construction of summer cottages. Much of this alteration occurred prior to the passage of the Great Ponds Act in the 1970s. Many of the older cottages are built close to the shore, with septic systems situated less than 100 feet from the water. This results in the nearly annual flooding of their septic systems during periods of spring high water. Since most camps were built prior to the establishment of minimum lot sizes, many are on very small lots with little or no room to accommodate replacement septic systems.

The degree of vegetative cover around homes varies widely. In a few areas, most of the natural vegetation has been retained, including ground cover. More commonly, ground cover and shrubs have been removed. In places, older cottages are overtopped by full tree cover. Elsewhere, trees have been removed and lawns established. Because the sandy soils around the lake are extremely dry and low in natural fertility, many homes have difficulty maintaining lawns. Those lawns which are healthy and dense are most likely heavily fertilized or were created over imported loam. Those areas which are unprotected by vegetation are inevitably subject to erosion during rainstorms and spring runoff.

Many roads around the lake are unpaved and show evidence of considerable erosion over the years. Most of these roads are old camp roads which were constructed with little consideration for water movement.

Although Mousam Lake's non-attaining status is based on the declining transparency in the upper basin, it is also important to note the high dissolved oxygen depletion in deep areas of the lower basin of the lake.

**Square Pond:** Close in size to Mousam Lake with 850 acres of surface water. Square Pond has only 8.1 miles of shoreline. Average water depth is 21.4 feet. Unlike Mousam Lake, Square Pond's watershed is very small, only 4 square miles

(one-seventh of Mousam's). Local residents refer to it as "spring-fed." because its watershed is so small. Square Pond has a very slow flushing rate, replacing its water only once every three years.

Like Mousam Lake and most other ponds in the area. Square Pond is surrounded by coarse, sandy Adams and Colton soils. Topography is uneven, and steep in places. Square Pond's shoreland is dominated by slopes over 8, with most in the 8 - 25 range. Because these sandy shoreland soils lack binding agents, steeply sloped areas are especially vulnerable to erosion. DEP has placed Square Pond on a new "Watch List" as there are indications that the lake is under stress. Transparencies have been relatively stable, and chlorophyll A and total phosphorus values are low to moderate. Transparency has been about 20 feet. DEP also notes the pond's slow flushing rate and advises residents to exercise care so as not to increase the phosphorus load to the lake. Square Pond's shoreline is almost completely developed. The pattern of development is very similar that described around Mousam Lake, although Square Pond also hosts the Treasure Island community, which is actually in Shapleigh.. Because of their physical separation from mainland services, it is unlikely that septic systems on this island have been pumped out since they were installed, 15-20 years ago.

**Wilson Lake:** The lake has 298 acres of surface water, 3.7 miles of shoreline, and an average depth of 18.7 feet. It drains a relatively large watershed of 3.8 square miles, flushing .84 times per year - somewhat slower than the average Maine lake.

Unlike many other lakes in the area, Wilson's shoreland is not dominated by sandy soils, because the lake lies on the edge of coarse sand and gravel deposits. One-third of its shoreland is sandy, while much of the remainder is dominated by compact soils whose use is limited by wetness or slow infiltration. Slope in the area is moderate, often less than 8. Wilson Pond drains to Horn Pond, which ultimately drains to the Salmon Falls River. DEP considers water quality average, noting that transparency has fluctuated in recent years, ranging from 12 to 18 feet. Chlorophyll A and total Phosphorus values are moderate, and a dissolved oxygen deficiency exists by late summer. Wilson's shoreline is over 50% developed, with a second tier of homes flanking shoreline homes in places.

**Swan Pond:** The pond is essentially pristine, although no detailed information is available.

As noted in the Land Use section of this plan, most of the ponds in Acton are heavily developed around the water frontage. However, land outside of the immediate frontage may not be as developed (while still being located within the watershed). A few ponds – Moose Pond, Swan and Hansen ponds are still relatively undeveloped. An anomaly in the towns Shoreland Zoning provisions however, allows the lot sizes of one acre within the shoreland zone for those ponds as compared to a two acre limit outside of those zones.

Per-Acre Phosphorus Allocations for Selected Lakes

LAKE	TOWN	DDA	ANAD	AAD	GF	D	F	WQC	LOP	C	P
Balch Pond	Acton	597	60	537	0.3	161	6.81	mod-sensitive	Mm	1.00	0.042
Great East Lake	Acton	2391	300	2091	0.3	627	40.1	outstanding	h	0.50	0.032
Hansen Pond	Acton	219	20	199	0.2	40	1.65	mod-sensitive	m	1.00	0.041
Horn Pond	Acton	373	60	313	0.3	94	7.05	mod-sensitive	m	1.00	0.075
Loon Pond	Acton	420	50	370	0.3	111	4.38	mod-sensitive	m	1.00	0.039
Moose Pond	Acton	79	8	71	0.25	18	1.05	mod-sensitive	h	0.75	0.044
Mousam Lake – North	Acton	625	120	505	0.35	177	9.63	mod-sensitive	h	0.75	0.041
Mousam Lake – South	Acton	1205	125	1080	0.3	324	13.56	mod-sensitive	h	0.75	0.031
Wilson Lake	Acton	2241	1300	1941	0.3	582	26.17	mod-sensitive	h	0.75	0.034
Square Pond	Acton	2646	200	2446	0.3	734	39.38	mod-sensitive	h	0.75	0.04
Swan Pond	Acton	667	70	597	0.2	119	4.05	mod-sensitive	m	1.00	0.034

- DDA** Direct land drainage area in Township in acres
- ANAD** Area not available for development in acres
- AAD** Area available for development in acres (DDA – ANAD)
- GF** Growth Factor
- D** Area likely to be developed in acres (GF x AAD)
- F** lbs. phosphorus allocated to towns share of watershed per ppb in lake
- WQC** Water quality category
- LOP** Level of Protection (h = high (coldwater fishery); m = medium)
- C** Acceptable increase in lake’s phosphorus concentration in ppb
- P** lbs. per acre phosphorus allocation (FC/D)



### Summary Table of Lakes

Lake Name	Flushing Rate	Watershed Size	Drainage Pattern
Balch Pond	2.7 flushes/year	5.5 square miles	Already included in plan
Great East Lake	0.3 flushes/year	12.9 square miles	Drains to Salmon Falls River
Hansen Pond	NA	0.49 square miles	Drains to Little Ossipee River
Horn Pond	NA	1.73 square miles	Wilson Lake drains into Horn, then drains to Salmon Falls River
Loon Pond	1.7 flushes/year	0.66 square miles	Drains to Mousam Lake
Moose Pond	NA	0.19 square miles	Drains into Swan Pond, which then drains to Little Ossipee River
Mousam Lake	Already in plan	Already in plan	Loon, Square & Goose Ponds drain to Mousam. Outlets to Mousam River
Square Pond	Already in plan	Already in plan	Drains into Goose Pond then Mousam
Swan Pond	NA	0.67 square miles	Moose Pond flows into Swan and then drains to Little Ossipee River

#### Non-Point Source Priority Watersheds

Mousam Lake, Square Pond and Wilson Lake are on the NPS Priority Watersheds list, which indicates that have significant value from a regional or statewide perspective and have water quality that is either impaired, or threatened to some degree due to non-point source water pollution. This list, which was adopted by the Land & Water Resources Council in October 1998, helps identify watersheds where state and federal agency resources for NPS water pollution prevention or restoration should be targeted. Mousam Lake is also on the list of lakes “Most at Risk” from new development under the Maine Stormwater Law. This list identifies the areas in which the stormwater quality standards described in the rules apply.

#### Invasive Plants

The Maine DEP has been very active regarding public education regarding aquatic invasive plants. Their website states that the introduction of non-indigenous invasive aquatic plant and animal species to the United States has been escalating with widespread destructive consequences. Known infestations of aquatic invaders in Maine, at present, are relatively low, but we would be remiss to assume that this situation will continue indefinitely. Significant habitat disruption, loss of native plant and animal communities, reduced property values, impaired fishing and water

recreation opportunities and large public/private expenditures have accompanied invasive plant introductions in all of the lower 48 states except Maine.

However, the variable-leaf milfoil has been found on the New Hampshire side of Balch Pond. That sign and the increasing use of Acton's lakes for recreational boating – particularly by out of state boaters – presents a real danger to Acton and the health of its ponds. The town currently has boat inspection program underway in town and also supports volunteer lake monitoring program. These are important volunteer efforts which need to remain in place to combat invasive aquatic plants.

### Rivers and Streams

The state of Maine 1998 Section 303(d) Study of Maine waters indicates there are no water quality limited rivers and streams in Acton – although the Salmon Falls River (the towns border with New Hampshire) is limited (for BOD,S OD and bacteria) further down stream in South Berwick.

### Floodplains

Acton's floodplains are mainly located along the Salmon Falls River and the border with New Hampshire. The Floodplain Map can be found on the following page. The area is sparsely populated resulting in few flood insurance claims for the most recent years.

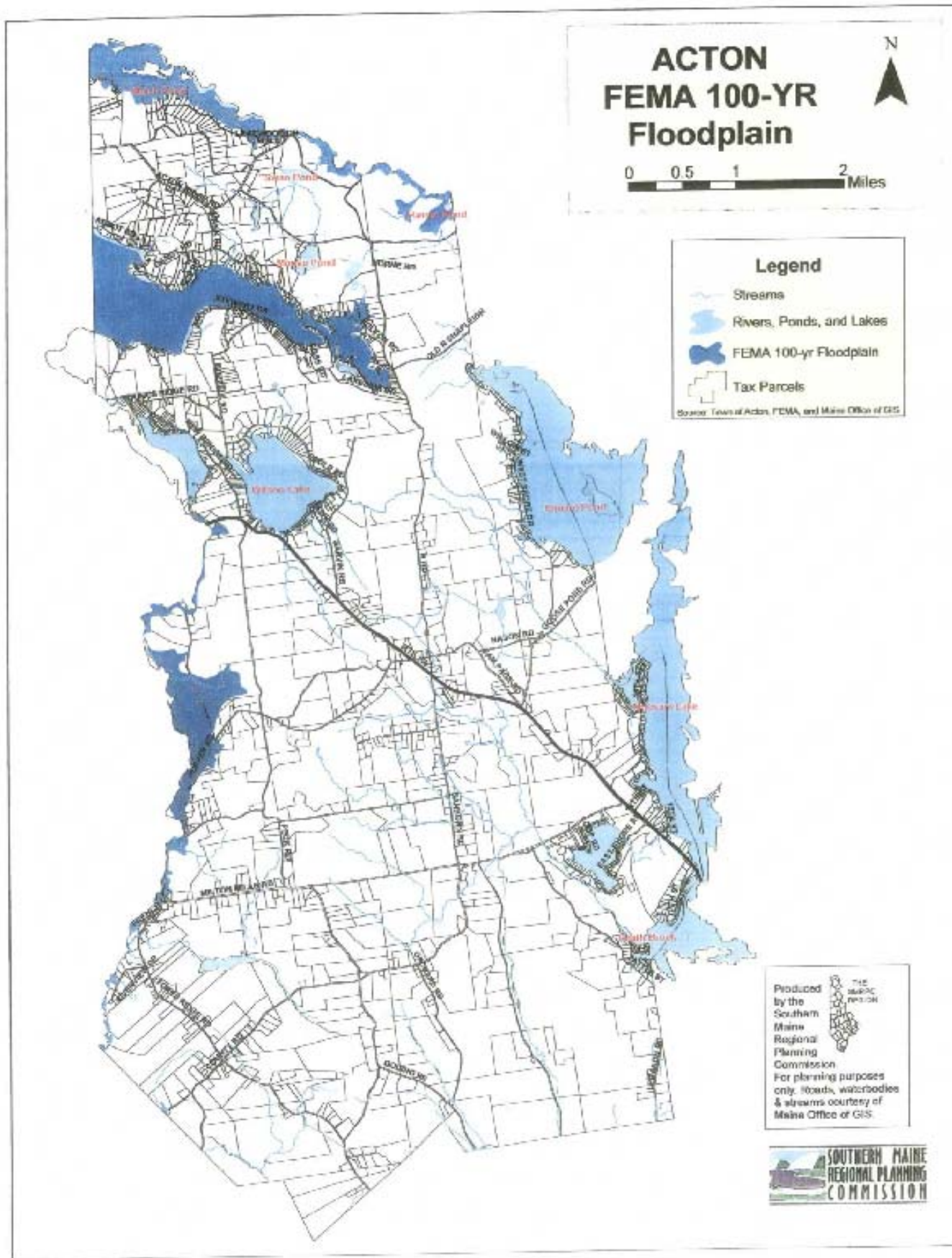
### Summary Discussion

Acton is a community with a wide variety of natural resources and is a primary reason why people like to live in Acton and will likely continue to want to move there. However, some of these resources are subject to the pressures that accompany unplanned growth.

For instance the ponds and lakes for which Acton is known are nearly built out. Yet the uplands that are near those ponds are still relatively undeveloped. However, surface drainage (as well as malfunctioning septic systems near shore) can negatively impact these water bodies and potentially impact the value of the waterfront properties which abut them (and which form a large portion of the town's tax base). Some studies (in the China Lake region of Maine) have shown a correlation between declining water quality and declining property values. In Acton the maintenance of these property values along the shore is of critical importance to the town's financial health. This relationship shows the possible importance of incorporating watershed protection measures into town ordinances as well as non-regulatory efforts.

Similarly, the town contains vast tracts of forest lands, some of it located in areas defined as unfragmented forest. However these areas – some of which are currently in Tree Growth – are now becoming more valuable as house lots rather than woodlots (or in some cases the parcels are harvested and then subdivided). The sale of the Lavalley lands and it's subsequent harvesting and then subdividing may be a sign of things to come in Acton.

Growth in Acton (or the ability to plan for growth) is somewhat constrained due to the lack of public sewer in the community. To that end, seeking methods to guide



# ACTON FEMA 100-YR Floodplain



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

**Legend**

- Streams
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- FEMA 100-yr Floodplain
- Tax Parcels

Source: Town of Acton, FEMA, and Maine Office of GIS

Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission  
 For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



growth is dependent on soils types to some degree. Many in town are concerned with allowing more dense development (less than two acres per house lot) because of concerns about water quality. Additional research and education to municipal officials and the public about septic systems and minimum lot sizes would be beneficial.

The town's other resources, particularly scenic vistas and the town's rare and endangered plant and animal resources are notable on both a local and regional level. However neither at this time, through local zoning or state regulation, are protected from development. A look at open space development standards might help in this regard. The town is fortunate to have two newly formed Land Trusts to aid in non-regulatory methods to protect these resources.

## Chapter 5

### Cultural Resources

#### Historic and Archeological

The chapter on Acton's local history indicates that the town has a colorful heritage of industry and prosperity. That heritage is worth preserving, as a reminder of things gone by and a message to the future. Acton's current era as a lake resort community could pass just as its bustling farm and mill economy faded 100 years ago.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) has provided data on prehistoric archeological sites, historic archeological sites and sites either on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

One prehistoric archeological site was found in Acton. The site is located near Acton Ridge. Prehistoric archeological sites have evidence of Native American activity prior to the arrival of Europeans. For the most part, they are found along ridge lines and also near rivers and other water bodies. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission recommends further survey work along lakeshores, river banks and sandy soils near streams in the town of Acton to identify other possible sites. Most of the prime frontage areas have been extensively developed, which makes it important that the town examine remaining possible areas for signs of prehistoric settlement, prior to their development.

State records list only one historic site in Acton -- 19th-century silver mines, of which only a few water-clogged shafts remain. But local knowledge reveals a great many more artifacts of both structural and historical significance. Among them, the Great East Canal, at the foot of Great East Lake, and the Town Pound on the Milton Mills Road, both well-preserved examples of dry masonry. Three churches in Acton -- Milton Mills Baptist, South Acton Baptist and Acton Corner United Church -- contain some significant examples of early 19th Century architecture and decoration, as does the Town House. The Lincoln School, while not noteworthy as architecture, contains some not-so-distant memories of the era of neighborhood schoolhouses.

Acton is also the site of several cemeteries of significance, ranging from the family plot of a prominent Revolutionary War veteran, to the large Maplewood cemetery adjacent to the South Acton Church. In fact, a shortage of vacant cemetery space is one of the issues facing the town in its evaluation of public services.

The best examples of historic residential architecture are clustered in the South Acton/Milton Mills area. Acton Corner village, formerly a substantial commercial center, contains very few vestiges of its historic past.

The Acton-Shapleigh Historical Society has done much to protect historical records of the town and the town itself is working to restore Lincoln School as a museum. Since maintenance of Acton's rich history can serve both to preserve Acton's small town character and attract the interest of visitors, it may be worth any time and money spent in

restoring old sites and buildings, and identifying historic or archeological points of interest. This is also a recommendation from the MHPC.

### **Farming in Acton**

To some degree the farming situation in Acton reflects the decline of farming in York County. Since 1982 those who list farming as their principal occupation has declined from 253 to 225 in 1997 on a county level. The number of farms has decreased from 586 to 499. Perhaps most significantly the average size of a farm has decreased from 170 acres to 117 acres in 1997. Acton may be well aware of the loss of orchard acres. The number of orchard acres went from 1,593 in 1982 to 728 in 1997.

Farming may represent more than the buying and selling of produce. It may represent a landscape that residents know and love as well as an economic enterprise which provides other benefits to Maine's economy. Within York County there are 7 farmer's markets, 56 farmstands, 15 pick your own enterprises, 3 community supported agricultural ventures as well as fairs, farmdays, and other events at both the county and local level. These are important aspects of life in rural York County and also as far as marketing the state to tourism interests and as a way of life.

In Acton and the surrounding communities farming as a way of life and occupation is severely threatened. The map "Lands Not Readily Available for Development" shows the parcels now included in the Farm and Open Space Program. These are predominantly Orchards in town located off Route 109 and the H-Road. These are important not only for the apples but for the character they bring to the community. A community visioning meeting for the Three Rivers Land Trust in 2002 highlighted the role these farms play in the community –particularly to the scenic views and character they create. They were listed as amongst the more valued resources in town.

However there are a number of other farms in Acton which, while small scale in nature do provide farm products and are a component of the landscape within the town. These include:

- Blueberry Hill farm in South Acton
- Hurd Farm- South Acton –Cattle
- Kelly, Smith and Romac Farms – off Rte. 109 and H Road – Apples
- Highland Acre Farm –Nursery Stock- Acton Center
- Kysack – South Acton- Elk
- Davis –South Acton – Maple Syrup
- Daigne – North Acton –Maple Syrup

### **Summary Discussion**

While Acton seems to contain a number of historical assets, there appears to be a need to better chronicle and survey those assets. At the current time there appears to be little in the way of protection for the historic and archeological resources of the town – primarily

because of insufficient knowledge of their location. Rules and standards for protecting these resources need to be developed as the town continues to grow.

The towns farming heritage also appears threatened although this may be more due to issues of global and national competition in the agricultural market than with anything happening locally. However, through the farmland program, the actions of local land trusts in buying development rights and diversifying their use of their land (such as developing ski trails, seasonal events, etc.) there are now more options to reduce costs and provide revenue. Opening up other opportunities at these farms outside of farm products (such as cross country skiing) may also play a role in maintaining these farms. Open space development and the protection of scenic viewsheds can also help as an important regulatory option.

## Chapter VI

### Fiscal Review of Acton

#### **Introduction**

Understanding the fiscal capacity of Acton is a key part of assessing its ability to accommodate and plan for future growth. This section examines recent trends and expected future changes in the town's valuation, tax rate, public revenues and expenditures, and its ability to carry debt. These are all key determinants when one examines the town's ability to absorb and plan for growth. Fiscal data for Acton from 1993 –2003 is shown on the following page.

#### **Property Valuation**

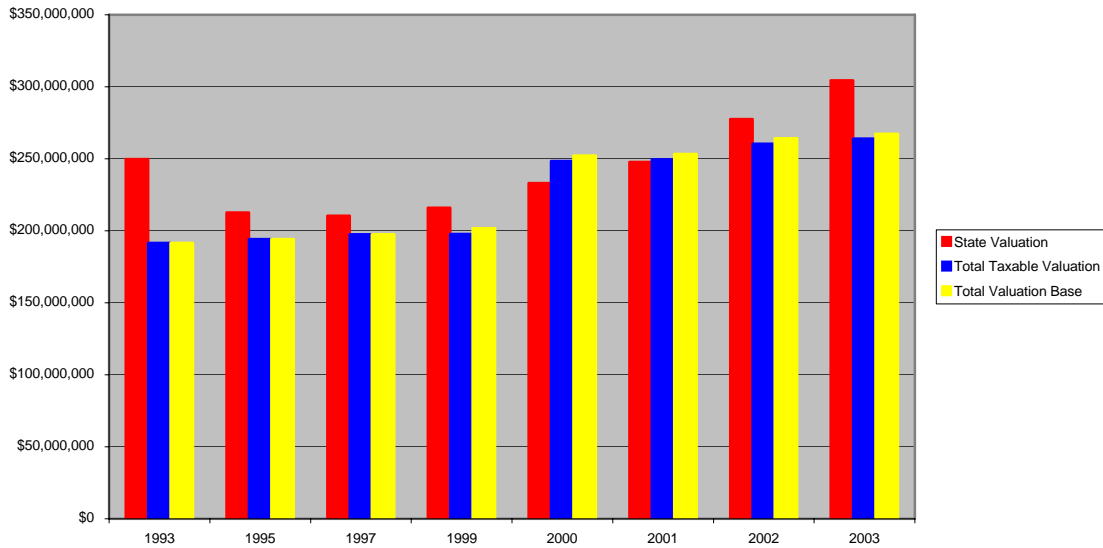
Property valuation is calculated each year by both the State of Maine and the Town of Acton. Maine laws state that, if the total property value reported by a municipality drops below 70 percent of the state's valuation for that town, the town must conduct a revaluation. Typically, this only happens in towns experiencing very large increases in property value.

From 1993 through 2003, Acton's own statistics show that the Town's property valuation increased from \$ 191 million to \$267 million, a 39 percent increase over the ten-year period. During the same period, the state's figures show Acton's value growing from \$249 million to \$304 million, a gain of 22 percent.

As a result of the state's figures showing greater increases than the town's, Acton's valuation as a percentage of the state's valuation slipped from 94 percent in 1998 to 88 percent in 2003. While Acton's own valuation figures are not keeping pace with the state's reporting, the Town is still well above the 70 percent threshold for a potential revaluation, as shown in the following table.



### Valuation

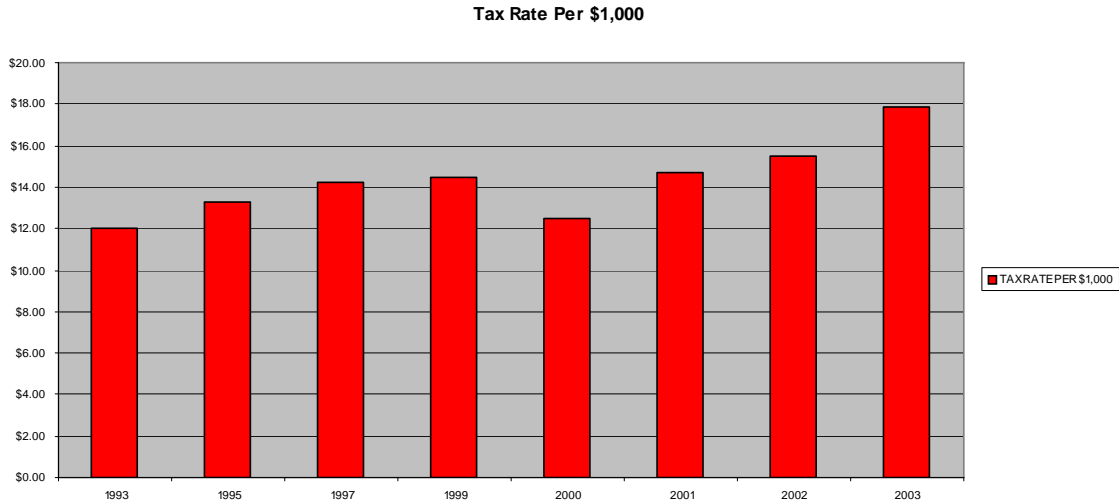


Source: Comprehensive Plan Committee

While valuation gains in recent years have been strong, the overall gain over the past decade has not been nearly as great. In 1991, Acton's valuation stood at \$188.9 million, and experienced a decline in the early part of the decade during the downturn in the regional real estate market, before recovering towards the end of the decade. Overall, the annual valuation change from 1991 through 2003 was just 2.9 percent, compared with an annual change from 1999 through 2003 of 13.2 percent.

### Property Tax Rate

Acton's property tax rate for 2003 is in the lower third of towns in York County, at \$17.85 per \$1,000 in valuation. Its tax rate has remained relatively stable over the past five years, as it stood at \$14.50 in 1999, dropped to \$12.50 in 2000, and was raised to \$17.85 for 2003. The rate has gone up somewhat since 1991, however, when its tax rate was \$10.20. The graph below shows the changes over a ten year period.



Source: Comprehensive Plan Committee

Municipalities are subject to assessing standards requiring a 70% minimum assessment ratio and a maximum quality ratio of 20%. While the towns ratio has remained above 70% for the last decade the quality rating rose to over 20% in 1999. A total revaluation was initiated in 1999.

The table below highlights the ratio for the last few years:

Year	Assessment Ratios		Ratio
	Town Valuation	State Valuation	
2000	252,144,253	247,850,000	102%
2001	253,365,832	277,600,000	91%
2002	264,117,539	304,500,000	87%
2003	267,291,976	372,250,000	72%

### Full Value Tax Rate

The municipal property tax rate set by a town is a reflection of many factors, including property value change, spending priorities, inflation, policy decisions, state and federal aid, and public perception. Because the tax rate of a town is subject to outside influence, a more accurate measure of how the tax rate is truly affected is the equalized tax rate, also known as the “full value tax rate.”

The full value tax rate is calculated by dividing a town’s annual financial commitment from its budget into the state valuation of the town for that year. In 2002, the town’s full value tax rate was \$14.54; in 2003 this rate was \$15.47. (Source; Richard Neal, Comprehensive Planning Committee)

## Revenues

Table 4 compares the breakdown of Acton’s General Fund revenue by major source in 1998 and 2002. As is the case with most Maine municipalities, property taxes account for the lion’s share of the town’s revenue. This share has declined somewhat over the past five years, though, dropping from 72 percent of the budget to 69 percent. The second largest category, intergovernmental revenue, grew its share from 16 to 21 percent, primarily due to increased state educational aid, as Acton’s public school enrollment continues to rise.

Overall, the amount of revenue collected by the Town of Acton increased every year from 1998 to 2002, from \$3.93 million in 1998 to \$5.27 million in 2002—an annual increase of 7.6 percent. Property tax revenues grew by about 6 percent annually, from \$2.8 to \$3.6 million.

Deductions are other revenues used to reduce the amount of money to be raised by taxation. This might include both estimated, designated and undesignated revenues that may be appropriated by Town Meeting. It might include balances carried forward and the use of undesignated surplus for instance. It is recommended that the minimum amount to be retained in the undesignated fund balance be at least 10% of the commitment. (in Acton’s case about \$400,000). The town currently has an undesignated fund balance of about \$577,000.

Table 4  
**General Fund Revenue Sources, FY 1998-2002**

	1998		2002		Annual % Change
	Amount	% of Total	Amount	% of Total	
Property Taxes	\$2,836,880	72.1%	\$3,648,584	69.2%	6.5%
Excise Taxes	\$216,115	5.5%	\$339,958	6.4%	12.0%
Licenses & Permits	\$22,482	0.6%	\$48,070	0.9%	20.9%
Intergovernmental Revenue	\$635,910	16.2%	\$1,102,859	20.9%	14.8%
Investment Income	\$0	0.0%	\$22,938	0.4%	na
Miscellaneous Revenues	\$220,986	5.6%	\$111,160	2.1%	-15.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,932,373</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$5,273,569</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>

Source: Town of Acton 2002 Annual Report

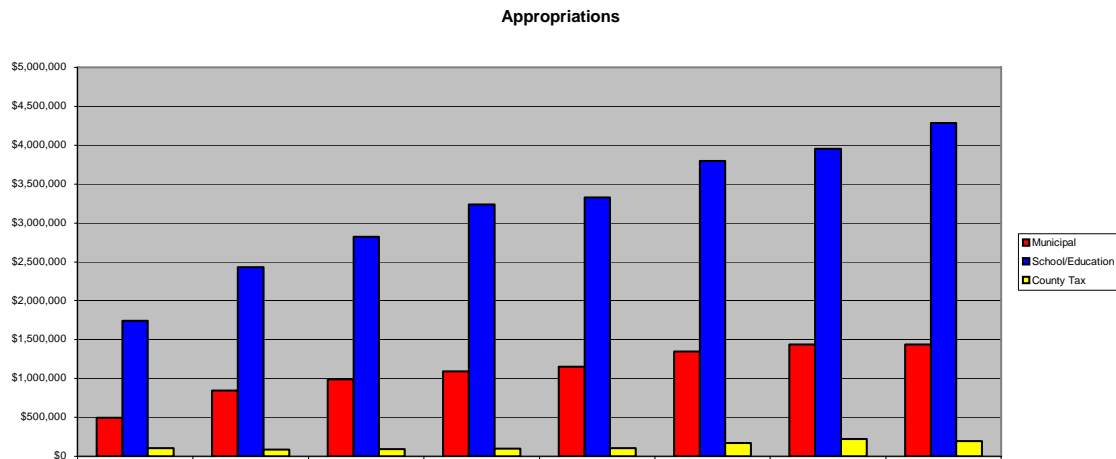
## Expenditures

The Town of Acton’s General Fund expenditures increased by more than did its revenues from 1998 through 2002, growing from \$3.66 million in 1998 to \$5.27 million in 2002—an annual rate of increase of 9.5 percent.

Among expenditure categories, education is by far the largest, and its share has been growing. In 1998, this line item accounted for 71 percent of the Town’s total spending;

its share increased to 76 percent in 2002. Overall, education spending grew from \$2.2 to \$3.6 million during this period (excluding debt service), an annual rate of increase of 12 percent. Other categories in which expenditures grew rapidly were public safety (29 percent), county tax (16 percent), debt service principal (14 percent), and health & sanitation (13 percent). Categories for which spending decreased were debt service interest (-8 percent) and social services (-3 percent). Table 5 below shows changes by category from 1998-2002.

The chart below highlights general expenditures in Acton over a longer period (1993-2002). Appropriations have increased 153% from Fiscal Year 1993 to Fiscal Year 2004.



The table below highlights the towns spending patterns as it relates to municipal services and education.

Table 5  
**General Fund Expenditures, FY 1998-2002**

	1998		2002		Annual % Change
	Amount	% of Total	Amount	% of Total	
General Government	\$210,512	5.7%	\$283,140	5.4%	7.7%
Public Safety	\$38,245	1.0%	\$106,888	2.0%	29.3%
Health & Sanitation	\$143,540	3.9%	\$234,165	4.4%	13.0%
Social Services	\$15,024	0.4%	\$13,365	0.3%	-2.9%
Library	\$5,200	0.1%	\$5,574	0.1%	1.8%
Education	\$2,245,784	61.3%	\$3,579,429	67.9%	12.4%
Public Works	\$435,714	11.9%	\$436,003	8.3%	0.0%
County Tax	\$91,530	2.5%	\$167,595	3.2%	16.3%
Unclassified	\$10,471	0.3%	\$10,409	0.2%	-0.1%
Emergency Response	\$111,183	3.0%	\$0	0.0%	-100.0%
Debt Service					
Principal	\$180,000	4.9%	\$304,839	5.8%	14.1%
Interest	\$175,294	4.8%	\$127,183	2.4%	-7.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,662,497</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$5,268,590</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>

Source: Town of Acton 2002 Annual Report

## Debt Load

The amount of debt principal carried by the Town of Acton increased by 69 percent from 1998 to 2002, growing from \$180,000 to \$304,839. However, the amount of interest paid on debt by the town decreased from \$175,294 to \$127,183 during the same time. Overall, the town's total annual debt load was \$432,022 in 2002, representing 8.2 percent of its total annual budget. This was up from its debt load of 6.7 percent in 1998. Typically, a debt load above eight percent is considered high.

For the years 2003 through 2007, the town projects that it will carry forward \$180,000 in principal and no more than \$111,000 in interest for any one year—a total of about \$290,000 in annual debt service obligations. At this level of debt, the town's debt load will be around five percent of its Fiscal Year 2003 budget of \$5.2 million. This amount does not include the purchase/lease of a new fire truck which will cost approximately \$62,000 in principal and interest over the next three years.

The town would be able to take on an additional \$130,000 in annual debt service payments (principal and interest) before reaching the eight percent threshold (again this does not include the lease purchase of the fire truck). In addition, if the town's budget continues to increase in size, the town will be able to take on still more debt.

Table 6 below shows the town's past and future debt load (reflecting school bonds only):

Table 6

### Outstanding Debt and Debt Load

**Current Outstanding Debt, June 30, 2002:** \$1,605,000

<b>Annual Debt Service Obligations, 1998-2002</b>				
	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent of FY Budget</b>
1998	\$180,000	\$175,294	<b>\$355,294</b>	6.7%
1999	\$270,631	\$171,973	<b>\$442,604</b>	8.4%
2000	\$272,726	\$157,097	<b>\$429,823</b>	8.2%
2001	\$271,804	\$145,240	<b>\$417,044</b>	7.9%
2002	\$304,839	\$127,183	<b>\$432,022</b>	8.2%

<b>Projected Annual Debt Service Obligations, 2003-2007</b>				
	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent of FY03 Budget</b>
2003	\$180,000	\$111,349	<b>\$291,349</b>	5.5%
2004	\$180,000	\$98,254	<b>\$278,254</b>	5.3%
2005	\$180,000	\$85,114	<b>\$265,114</b>	5.0%
2006	\$180,000	\$71,906	<b>\$251,906</b>	4.8%
2007	\$180,000	\$58,631	<b>\$238,631</b>	4.5%

Source: Town of Acton 2002 Annual Report

It should also be pointed out that the town had a surplus of approximately \$760,000 in 2003. This year the surplus had fallen down to \$535,000.

**Future Revenues and Expenditures**

As any budget analyst knows, forecasting revenues and expenditures anytime into the future is a risky business (particularly with tax reform up in the air). However the table below (for illustrative purposes only) may help to highlight where the town may stand in the next five years assuming a consistent rate of growth (based on the past) for both revenues and expenditures. Revenues would include property taxes, etc. When looking at the table one needs to be reminded that the town must balance revenues and expenditures on a year to year basis.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Revenues</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2003	5,273,569	5,268,590	4,979
2004	5,674,360	5,769,106	-94,746
2005	6,105,612	6,317,171	-211,560
2006	6,569,638	6,917,302	-347,664
2007	7,068,931	7,574,446	-505,516
2008	7,606,169	8,294,018	-687,849
2009	8,184,238	9,081,950	-897,712

In other words, assuming an annual rate of growth in revenues of 7.6% and a rate of growth in expenditures of 9.5% the town will likely see the need for increased revenues (or decreasing expenditures) of 1% to 11% over the next five or six years. It should also be pointed out this assumes no new major capital investment or additions to debt load.

**The Impacts of LD1 on Acton and School Costs**

Recent changes to the education funding formula appear as if they will have an impact on Acton and education budget that was not likely anticipated with the passage of LD1. Due to the unique fact that Acton only receives 12.1% of its education budget from the state, any significant growth could have a major impact on school costs in the future. The surrounding communities receive over 50% of their education budget from the state. Under the new education funding formula, Acton will only receive 14.4% of its basic allocation of the Essential Program and Services (EPS) funding for FY06 with no increase over FY05. In comparison with surrounding communities the state share is as follows: Sanford , will receive 68% of its EPS with an increase of over 4 million dollars; SAD 57 will receive an increase of 50% or 1.7 million dollars and SAD 60 will receive an increase of 67% or 1.8 million dollars from 05 figures.

The end results of these figures would trend towards growing local share of school costs as opposed to the reductions as envisioned in LD1.

## **Summary**

Acton currently has one of the lower tax rates in York County. The town is fortunate to have a number of highly valued seasonal homes which provide revenue while demanding little in the way of services. However as many of these homes change from seasonal to year round, and the demand for services increases the town may find itself needing additional taxes to provide those services.

The town's current building cap provides a brake on explosive growth. However even with this cap growth and the service demands will likely be at least the same as in prior years. This may point to the need for a growing tax rate and/or additional sources of revenue (such as grants, increased fees for certain services) or finally methods to reduce the costs of growth. These issues can be examined in both the land use and fiscal policies sections.

## Chapter VII

### Public Facilities/Municipal Infrastructure

Acton is a fairly large town by York County standards, comprising an area of 37.8 square miles or 24, 192 acres. This makes Acton the 10<sup>th</sup> largest town geographically in York County. This is important as one looks at public facilities, governmental services and schools. The population density for Acton is 57 people per square mile. This makes it the fourth least populated town (by density) in York County.

This is notable for a few reasons. First, providing municipal services and infrastructure for a small population over a large area can be costly. Secondly, it makes wise facility and infrastructure planning more important. This section looks at some of the critical components of Acton's public facility and infrastructure framework.

#### Schools

Acton is somewhat unique for a town its size in that it maintains and operates its own school system. This is a critical issue for the town as it plans for the future. Students in Acton attend Acton Elementary School for grades K-8. Following this, the town has worked out arrangements with other communities to attend High School at various locations. Over the years this has included Wells High School, Noble, Sanford and private schools as well. However, within the past year Acton has reached an agreement with Sanford to send their high school students to Sanford High School only.

The following table provides a comparison of school enrollment figures for Acton for the years 1996, 2002, and 2003:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1996/97</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2003/04</b>
K	21	25	35
1	33	34	28
2	31	33	33
3	33	35	36
<b>4</b>	36	29	36
5	29	38	33
<b>6</b>	40	20	38
<b>7</b>	38	45	21
8	24	32	41
9	37	30	34
10	11	29	29
11	21	47	48
12	17	27	26
Totals	373	432	446

Source: Maine Dept. of Education; Town Report



These increases account for a 20% increase in school age population from 1996-2003 and a 3% increase over the past year. If the town were to see a 3% yearly increase in school age population over the next ten years the school age population would rise to 599 students (about 60 students per year). If the town were to maintain their existing building cap of 35 units per year (and build to that amount) and the ratio of school age children to dwelling units were to remain the same over the next ten years, the town would see a smaller increase – approximately 45-50 students per year. Prior to the cap, the school had projected a fairly consistent ten -year increase of about 100 students.

The existing number of students at the K-8 level in Acton is about 300. The capacity of the school according to the school officials can be computed in different ways. Based on the Maine Department of Education guidelines for seating capacity based on per pupil square footage, the capacity of school would be 454 students. The second computation calls for a maximum class size for educational efficiency. This would result in a capacity of 320 students (roughly 16-20 students per class). The School department feels that many of the space issues are directly related to new programs required through Maine Learning Results and the No Child Left Behind Act. This has resulted in new needs for support services and specialized rooms. With these standards in place it is likely the town will need to expand the facility in the next 5-10 years.

The issue of school expansion is a critical issue for the community due to the potential costs involved. When the structure was built, it was believed that a second floor could be added for the additional capacity. It is clear more analysis and community discussion is needed to clarify the options for an expanded school.

### **School Assessments**

The following is a summary of some of Acton’s results in the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) Test scores for fourth grade 2002/2003:

#### **Reading**

	Avg Scale Score	Does not meet Standard	Partially meets Standard	Meets standard	Exceeds standard
Acton	536	12%	58%	27%	4%
State	539	11%	40%	48%	1%

#### **Writing**

Acton	528	19	67	15	0
State	530	15	73	12	0

#### **Math**

Acton	525	50	30	13	7
State	532	50	30	13	7

Science/Technology

Acton	522	50	50	0	0
State	526	31	65	5	0

The eighth grade scores for 2002/2003 generally mirror this sample.

**Recreation Facilities**

Most of Acton’s recreational facilities are located at the elementary school on Milton Mills Road, although the town is actively engaged in providing additional facilities at a site on Rte. 109 near “town center”. The following table summarizes the town’s existing inventory for facilities and compares it to national standards adopted by the National Recreation and Parks Association which uses facilities per 1,000 residents as a standard:

Existing Needs (based on estimated 2002 population of 2,000)  
Active Recreational facilities

<b><u>Facility Type</u></b>	<b><u>Existing Inventory</u></b>	<b><u>NRPA Standards</u></b>	<b><u>Acton Needs</u></b>	<b><u>Deficiency</u></b>
Softball or Little League Field	2 plus soccer field	.75 per 1000 population	1.5	0
Baseball 90’ Bases	0	.16 per 1000 population	Possibly 1	1?
Basketball Court	2	.50 per 1000 population	1	0
Tennis Court	1	.67 per 1000 population	1	0
Multi-purpose field for football, soccer, field hockey	2	.50 per 1000 population	2	0
Neighborhood Playgrounds,	1 with 1 planned	2-10 acres in size located within ½ mile of each housing concentration of 50 or more homes	2-3	1?

It should be pointed out that Acton has a number of passive and outdoor recreational opportunities at the Town Forest and along the many ponds in town.

FUTURE NEEDS (based on 2012 population 2,500)

<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>NRPA Standards</b>	<b>Acton Needs</b>
Baseball 90' Bases	.16 per 1000 population	1
Basketball Court	.50 per 1000 population	
Tennis Court	.67 per 1000 population	1
Multi-purpose field for football, soccer, field hockey	.50 per 1000 population	
Neighborhood Playgrounds,	2-10 acres in size located within ½ mile of each housing concentration of 50 or more homes	1

In the end, due to the relatively small population base of the town there is not a tremendous need for recreational facilities. The Recreation Committee has proposed a ten year plan which would include:

- Development of a softball field at the Rte. 109 site
- A jogging or walking path around the facility
- Nature trails at or near the facility
- Additional parking

The development of these facilities will bring the town very close to recommended standards for recreational facilities as they move into the future.

However, these standards need to be measured in local community desires as well. The town may wish to consider the addition of the noted facilities as they examine the development of new subdivisions within the community. The town may also have opportunities to participate with other towns (\*such as Shapleigh) in the development of facilities on a regional basis.

**Town Equipment and Inventory**

The following is an inventory of buildings and equipment which comes from the town of Acton Selectman's Office. The list forms a basis for evaluation of what may need to be replaced or maintained in the future.

ID No	Asset	Description	Account	Location	Date Acquired	Cost
1000	Building	School	School	Milton Mills Rd.	46,'57,'90	
1100	Building	Pub.Safety	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1998	500,000
1200	Building	Town Office	Municipal	H Road	1987	225,000
1300	Building	Town Hall	"	H Road	1830	Historical
1400	Building	Sand/Salt Shed	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.	1992	110,000
1500	Building	Tractor Shed	"	Sanborn Rd.	1990	35,000
1600	Building	Wood Stor. Shed	"	Sanborn Rd.	1950's	12,000
1700	Building	Commun.Tower	Pub.Safety	Blueberry Hill	1994	60,000
1800	Building	Library	Municipal	H Road	1886	Historical
1900	Building	Old fire station	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1969	20,000
2000	Building	Recycling Bldg.	Municipal	H Road	1995	35,000
2100	Building	Trans.Stat-Guardhouse	Municipal	H Road	1988	6,500
2200	Building	Trans.Stat-Debris roof	Municipal	H Road		7,500
2300	Building	Lincoln Schoolhouse	Municipal	Milton Mills Rd.	1884	Historical
2400	Land Imp	Recreation Dept.	Recreation	Route 109		
1001	Equip't	John Deere Tractor	School	Milton Mills Rd.	2003	lease/purc
1002	Equip't	Floor washer	School	Milton Mills Rd.	2000	4,000
1003	Equip't	Copy Machine	School	Milton Mills Rd.		
1004	Equip't	Copy Machine	School	Milton Mills Rd.		
1005	Equip't	Rizograph	School	Milton Mills Rd.		
1101	Equip't	Office Computer	Pub.Safety	Route 109		2,500
1102	Equip't	Office Phone System	Pub.Safety	Route 109		3,000
1150	Vehicle	Fire Truck	Pub.Safety	Route 109	2003	240,000
1151	Vehicle	Engine 1 Ford 750	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1976	
1152	Vehicle	Squad 1 Dodge	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1977	
1153	Vehicle	Forestry 1 GMC	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1984	
1154	Vehicle	Forestry 2 (refurbished)	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1970	
1155	Vehicle	Engine 2 GMC	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1988	
1156	Vehicle	Tank 1 GMC	Pub.Safety	Route 109	1989	
1160	Equip't	Extrication Equipment	Pub.Safety	Route 109	not purch104	20,000
1161	Equip't	Radio Equipment	Pub.Safety	Route 109	2003	3,553
1162	Equip't	SCBA	Pub.Safety	Route 109	2001	32000
1401	Hwy.Equ.	1946 D6 Bulldozer	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.		
1402	Hwy.Equ.	Bryant Hwy. Sander	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.		
1403	Hwy.Equ.	Bryant Hwy. Sander 2	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.		
1404	Hwy.Equ.	Hopper Sander	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.		
1405	Hwy.Equ.	Hopper Sander 2	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.		
1406	Hwy.Equ.	York Rake	Hgwy.Dept.	Sanborn Rd.		
1201	Equip't	Computer System	Municipal	H Road		
1202	Equip't	Furnishings	Municipal	H Road		
1203	Equip't	Copy Machines	Municipal	H Road		

Historically, the Road Commissioners have utilized their own equipment for maintaining and upgrading of the town roads. As noted in the equipment profile, the town only owns a few sanders, a York rake, and a 1946 bulldozer for highway equipment. The Road Commissioners are reimbursed for the use of their equipment using rates determined by the annual town meeting. The Road Commissioners and the operators of their equipment are all town employees. Road maintenance and upgrades are generally determined by the Road Commissioners. Historically, neither the Planning Board nor Comprehensive Plan Committee has been involved with this process. With the possible development of a higher density village area and a less dense critical rural area the town may wish to examine a process which focuses roadway improvements based on this growth plan. A more formalized process may be suitable for the community at this time.

### **Municipal Buildings and Services**

Aside from the issue of schools, Acton has recently examined the issue of space and storage needs at the town hall and other municipal buildings. The Town Hall lacks storage space, private meeting space and large meeting space, and also possibly additional parking. A study committee recommended some of these storage and space needs could be resolved through a reorganization of space at the Town Hall. It does appear however that the issue needs further analysis as the town continues to grow – particularly in light of additional space needs elsewhere in town (and discussed below).

The Public Safety Building is fairly new (completed in 1998). Storage concerns however, have led to the use of the old Fire Station and Town Garage for the storage of some equipment. Additionally, the lack of office and meeting space has made training more difficult and limited attendance at meetings. This training is particularly important for a volunteer Fire Department such as Acton's. In effect while the building is only six years old there appears to be needs which will arise over the upcoming decade. Similarly, some equipment is aging as well. It would appear some vehicles, a new engine and a Thermal Imaging System will be needed in the next ten years as well.

Finally, there is the issue of personnel both for public safety and in Town Hall. While Acton's population does not immediately call for staffing at either place, the Fire Department in particular, has described a need for full time personnel or full time equivalents. This may need to be consideration in upcoming staffing and budget deliberations.

The salt sand shed was built in 1992, although there have been recent problems with the foundation which may need repair. The Transfer Station appears adequate to meet the needs of the town for the near future. It is possible an examination of the library and its needs might be conducted in the short term. However, it is also true many residents use the libraries in Sanford/Springvale for some needs – the Sanford/Springvale Library is about eight miles from the center of Acton. The town may wish to examine cooperative arrangements with surrounding towns for library use.

## **Solid Waste**

Acton is part of the group of towns who dispose of their trash at the Maine Energy Recovery Company (MERC) site in Biddeford. A recent study by the communities using the MERC site have shown MERC to be by far the most cost efficient method of disposal in the region (and perhaps the state). The town's disposal costs are likely to fall (based on recent negotiations) from about \$63 per ton to somewhere below \$52 per ton.

Acton has done a good job of recycling since the inception of the program in 1993. Acton falls in the middle of the pack as far as recycling rates for York County communities. The tables and charts on the following page highlight the town's efforts at recycling over the years:

## **Emergency Services**

Acton built a new Public Safety building in 1998 which houses the Fire and Rescue Squads. A new fire truck was purchased in 2003. The standard service radius for a fire station is about two miles – which does not cover the entire town. However, the town maintains mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns and has also been meeting with a ten town group in northern York County to discuss ideas on consolidation and cooperation. A fire substation, which might be combined with rural needs in the towns of Shapleigh and/or Newfield, is certainly a possibility. In 2002 the Acton Fire Department responded to 52 fires, 1 explosion, 57 rescues, 20 hazardous conditions calls, 16 service calls, 13 good intent calls, and 2 other calls for a total of 167 calls. In 1988, the department responded to 98 calls. The department is staffed by volunteers in a manner similar to many Maine towns. A stipend system is presently implemented. Additionally a small salary (approximately \$2,500 a year) is provided to the Fire Chief.

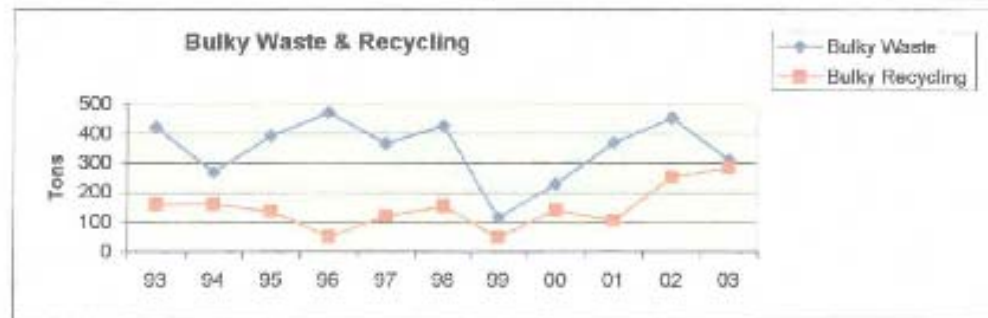
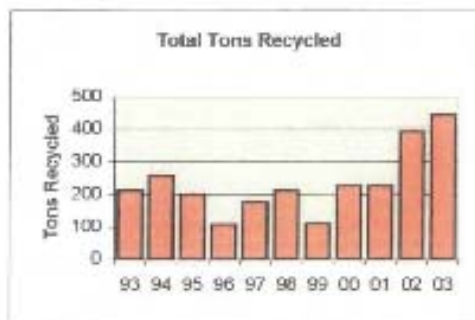
The ambulance and rescue services are provided by an association to which the town contributes \$10,000 per year. The remainder of their costs are funded by private donations and fundraising.

## **Police**

The State Police and York County Sheriffs department provides police coverage in Acton. With a population of just over 2,000, Acton is not yet in a position to need their own police force or police personnel. In fact, with more discussions on regionalization, the options of more efficiently using both the county and state police forces has merit. The town should monitor ongoing discussions at the county level about how much and how to pay for county police service.

## Acton, Maine

Year	Municipal MSW	Municipal Recycling	Bulky Waste	Bulky Recycling	Total Recycled	Total MSW	Base Recy Rate %	Adj. Recy Rate %	Municipal Expenses
93	745.00	38.90	420.55	160.00	209.90	1,371.00	15.00	20.00	
94	734.00	94.21	269.35	162.20	256.41	1,260.00	20.30	27.30	
95	732.00	61.41	392.92	138.10	199.51	1,324.00	15.10	23.10	
96	794.00	56.79	472.33	51.63	108.42	1,374.00	7.90	16.90	
97	837.00	54.18	368.60	120.55	174.73	1,381.00	12.70	21.70	
98	996.00	56.30	427.19	154.70	211.00	1,634.29	12.90	27.90	
99	950.00	58.09	115.92	50.40	108.49	1,174.41	9.20	18.20	
00	874.00	81.72	229.69	141.48	223.20	1,327.41	16.80	25.80	\$162,480
01	890.81	117.75	369.81	106.16	223.91	1,484.53	15.10	20.10	\$161,940
02	928.92	137.53	452.44	253.58	391.11	1,772.47	22.00	27.00	\$183,442
03	932.49	158.53	310.73	284.77	443.30	1,686.52	26.30	31.30	\$182,629
04									



This information was produced by the Maine State Planning Office based upon data submitted by the municipality.

## **Summary Discussion**

Acton is somewhat unique in the sense that for a small community the town must not only care for concerns related to the typical municipal operations (highway, etc) but also must deal with the school as a town function. This will necessitate a comprehensive community discussion in the near future about how best to meet the needs of Acton's children. Right now it is not clear when or how that process will proceed.

As issues of growth and development in Acton become increasingly complex (storm water management is an example), coordination of the Road Commissioners efforts will be an important part of the Board of Selectman's or Capital Improvements Committee's role. Roadways and their maintenance, have the potential to be a huge investment for the town in the next decade – particularly as growth continues in the rural parts of town.

The town might also explore (through their participation in the Ten Town Group of Northern York County) opportunities to jointly share resources and services. For instance, sharing resources related to the library and possibly personnel might serve the town in a more cost effective manner. Similarly, the growth of recreational facilities at the school has enabled the town to provide more recreational opportunities in a cost effective manner (by meeting both school and town needs).

The town would seem to need a clear and concise analysis of space, organizational and storage needs in the near future. This might also take into account personnel needs. Studies have shown that as towns move into the 2,500-3,500 population range, increased personnel and service costs become an issue. It is likely better to plan for those costs now than in the future.

It does seem clear the town needs to examine any and all capital needs (including road improvements) through a reinvigorated CIP Committee or a newly formulated committee. This plan might serve as the basis for that committee to examine many of the issues described in this section and outlined in the Capital Investment Strategy outlined in this plan as well.



## **Chapter VIII**

### **Transportation Inventory**

This transportation inventory collects the information necessary to develop a plan of action for Acton's future transportation system. Sources include: local knowledge and transportation data provided by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC) and other entities.

#### **ROADS**

##### **Jurisdiction**

Acton's road network is comprised of public and private roads as shown in Figure 1. **(The maps on the following pages were taken from the Maine DOT database and may contain inaccuracies as compared to the town road database).** The jurisdiction of a road defines the entity responsible for routine maintenance, including improvements to the road base, shoulders, drainage structures and pavement *and* snow removal. MaineDOT is responsible for State Highways (Route 109). The Town of Acton is responsible for winter maintenance on State-Aid Highways (Foxes Ridge Road and Milton Mills Road), and MaineDOT provides summer maintenance on these roads.

Based on Maine DOT data, the Town is also responsible for maintenance on roads indicated as "Townways" in Figure 1. Those listed as "Townway (summer)", according to DOT, are not plowed by the Town. Private and abandoned roads are also shown in Figure 1. For many years, the town of Acton has plowed and maintained many of the private camp roads. In 2003, a Road Ordinance was enacted, providing criteria for Town involvement in road maintenance. Starting in 2006, the Town will no longer plow or maintain private roads unless they meet the criteria set forth in the ordinance.

##### **Abandoned Roads**

The *Maine Municipal Roads Manual*, published by the Maine Municipal Association (MMA), details state statutes and best practices regarding the development and management of municipal roads. Chapter 3, "Disposing of Municipal Roads," details the procedures and legal concerns regarding the discontinuance and abandonment of roads.

There are three legal ways in which Maine municipalities may dispose of municipal roads: (1) statutory discontinuance, (2) statutory presumption of abandonment, and (3) common-law doctrine of abandonment by non-use. The two statutory means of disposal both concern whether or not a town continues to *maintain* a road, while the common-law approach concerns whether or not a road is *used* by the public. This distinction is key as it determines the approach a town should take in dealing with the disposal of roads.

Discontinuance is a formal procedure by which a municipality's legislative body approves an article to officially abandon public maintenance of a given road. A discontinuance article must

be voted upon at Town Meeting, and an appropriation to pay damages to abutting property owners must be made at the time of the vote. Damages paid to abutters must be estimated by an independent appraiser and should be measured by the reduction in fair market value caused by the discontinuance of public maintenance. The right-of-way of any road discontinued after September 3, 1965 will continue to exist as a public easement unless the article of discontinuance specifically rejects doing so.

Statutory abandonment applies if a road is not kept passable by public expense for 30 years or more. No vote is necessary to make this determination, and no damages must be paid. Deeming a road to be abandoned must be based on a review of factual evidence, which can include town records, requests for state aid, road maintenance logs, and written statements from local residents. Once a municipality has established the presumption of abandonment through factual evidence, the burden of proof shifts to the party or parties who are seeking to prove that the road in question has not been abandoned. Isolated acts of maintenance over a period of time do not count as ongoing maintenance. The party challenging the town must demonstrate consistent upkeep in order to counter the presumption of abandonment. If the 30-year period of abandonment ended after September 3, 1965, a public easement remains.

The 1997 Maine Supreme Judicial Court ruling *Shadan v. Town of Skowhegan* established that, after 20 years of public non-use of a road, the road shall be considered abandoned. Non-use is the standard for this type of abandonment, not lack of public maintenance. If a road is deemed abandoned in this manner, no public easement remains, and ownership transfers to abutters, who are granted ownership to the former centerline of the road.

### **Functional Classification**

The functional classification of a road is based on how the road is used and reflects the balance between providing mobility versus providing access to abutting property. MaineDOT uses Federal Functional Classifications to prioritize and assign funding as well as to design road improvements. Design choices for highway projects typically depend upon the road's functional classification. For example, arterials, which serve primarily through traffic and often carry heavy vehicles, will typically have thicker pavement, wider lanes and shoulders, increased sight distance, minimal horizontal and vertical curves, and limited access points or curb cuts. Local roads tend to be narrower, windier, and more accessible from abutting property.

Federal Functional Classifications are determined based on a statewide network of highways and include arterials, collectors, and local roads. However, all local roads do not necessarily provide the same level of mobility within a community. Acton Ridge Road, H Road, Sanborn Road, and Hopper Road are classified by Maine DOT as local roads, but function as collectors locally. Figure 2 shows both the Federal and local Functional Classifications of Acton's road network.

### **Road Design and Effect on Development**

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan stated, "Roads that are rated either 'poor' or 'deteriorating' should be avoided as future development areas until they are improved." At the time, this included: Goding Road, Mann Road, Orchard Road (formerly Winchell Orchard Road), Peck

Road, Sam Page Road (formerly Old Route 109), Tattle Street, and Young's Ridge Road. The 1991 Plan continued, "This listing does not include the significant number of camp roads in town, some of which are maintained at public expense." Since 1991, approximately half of the building permits issued were for development on these roads.

As of June 2003, the following minimum design standards are required for three classes of roads:

- Class A Roads are *new roads built after June 2003* that are built to the standards defined for Class A roads. Class A Roads can remain private or be brought before Town Meeting for acceptance as *Town Ways*.
- Class B Roads are *private roads* (as shown on the 2000 Acton 911 emergency dispatch maps) that can be brought before Town Meeting for acceptance as *Town Ways* after they are upgraded to the standards defined for Class B roads.
- Class C Roads are *private roads* (as shown as private on the 2000 Acton 911 emergency dispatch maps) that can be brought before Town Meeting for acceptance of a *Public Easement* after they are upgraded to the standards defined for Class C roads.

As a result, new private roads must be built to Class A Town standards, and existing private roads need to be upgraded to Class B Town standards in order to be accepted by Town Meeting as a Town Way or Public Easement. However, there is no requirement to upgrade existing private roads in order for the adjacent land to be developed.

Also, Acton's Zoning Ordinance requires residential lots in the General Purpose District to have 250 feet of frontage. The ordinance defines frontage as: "the horizontal distance between the intersections of the side lot lines with the front lot line." This definition makes no statement regarding what type of road upon which a lot fronts. In other words, no distinction is made between public or private roads, active or abandoned roads, paved or unpaved roads, et cetera.

Therefore, there is no regulatory guidance at this time that allows the Town to limit development on certain roads, such as substandard private roads, roads that the Town does not maintain year-round, or roads that have been abandoned or discontinued by the Town.

**Figure 1  
Transportation Infrastructure**

**Publicly Owned Bridges**

Bridge #	FSR	OWNER	CUSTODIAN
0642	30.3	Municipal	Municipal
1208	39.1	Municipal	Municipal
1211	85.5	MDOT	MDOT
2065	50.9	MDOT	MDOT
2363	77.5	MDOT	MDOT
2408	52.8	MDOT	MDOT
3300	40.0	MDOT	MDOT
3858	52.2	MDOT	MDOT
3859	88.3	MDOT	MDOT
5709	64.7	MDOT	MDOT
6355	75.1	Municipal	Municipal



**Legend**

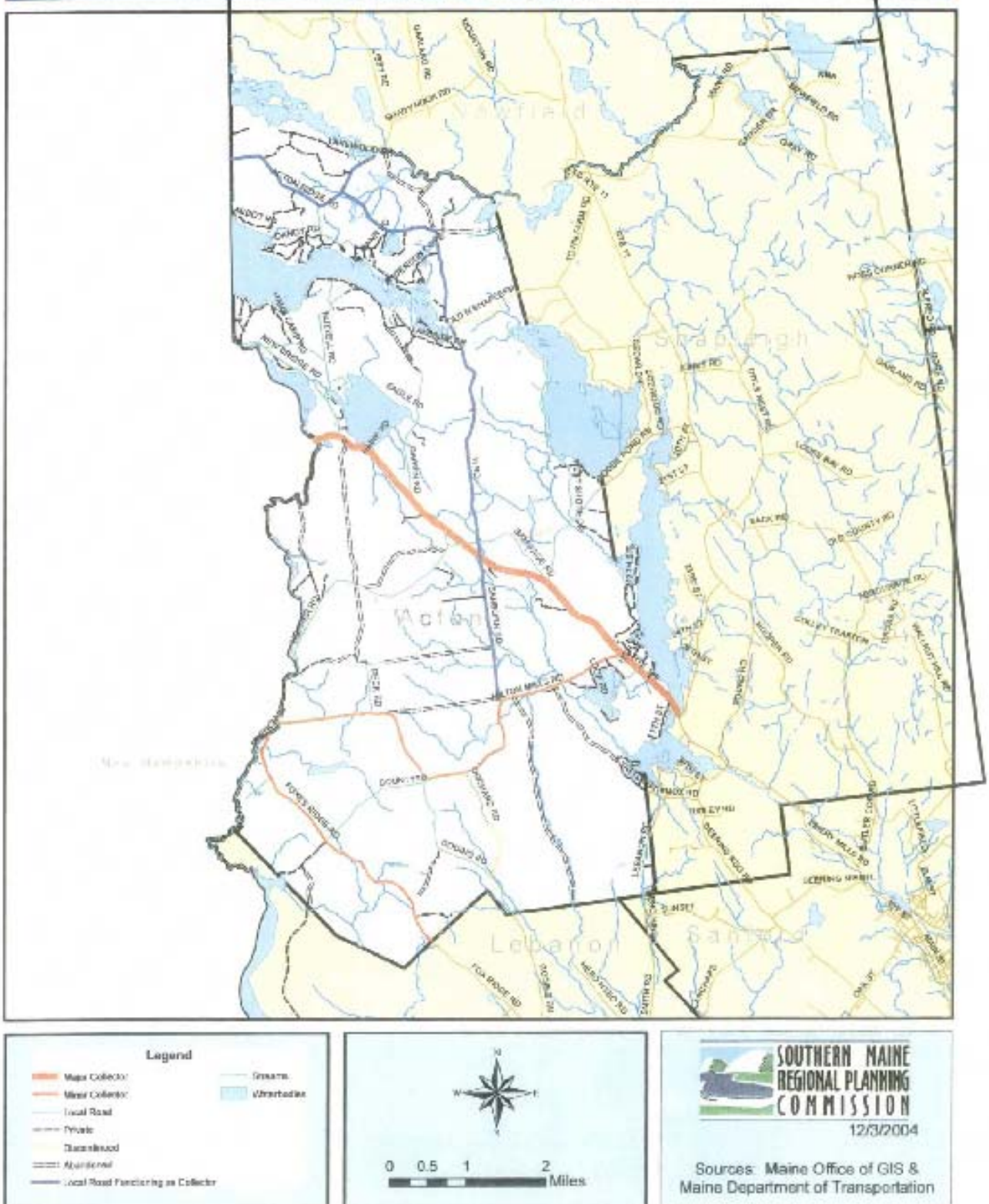
- State Hwy
- State Rd
- Townway
- - - Private
- Discontinued
- Abandoned
- State Maintained Bridges
- Town Maintained Bridges
- Streams
- Waterbodies

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

**SOUTHERN MAINE  
REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION**  
5/2/2004

Sources: Maine Office of GIS & Maine Department of Transportation

**Figure 2**  
**Functional Classification**



## BRIDGES

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Bridge Management Program lists eleven (11) publicly owned bridges in Acton. Maintenance responsibility is determined by the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT's) Local Bridge Program, which became law in July of 2001. Bridges of at least 20 feet in length on town or state-aid roads are the responsibility of MaineDOT. Minor spans, which are bridges that are at least 10 but less than 20 feet in length, that are on town roads are the responsibility of the municipality. If a minor span is located on a state or state-aid road, maintenance responsibility falls with MaineDOT. As such, the Town of Acton is responsible for the maintenance of three (3) bridges.

MaineDOT inspects all Bridges and Minor Spans on public ways every two years in accordance with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and MaineDOT's Bridge Management Coding Guides. The inspections result in a Federal Sufficiency Rating (FSR) for each bridge, which is collected by analyzing the condition of each of the bridge's components, such as the deck, the substructure, the superstructure, etc. Table 1 describes the FSR scale.

**Table 1. Federal Sufficiency Ratings**

FSR Range	Condition Description	FSR Range	Condition Description
90-100	Excellent	40-49	Poor
80-89	Very Good	30-39	Serious
70-79	Good	20-29	Critical
60-69	Satisfactory	1-19	Imminent Failure
50-59	Fair	0	Failed

Source: MaineDOT Bridge Management Division

Acton's bridges were last inspected in 2002. The three (3) town maintained bridges resulted in FSRs of 30.3, 39.1, and 78.1 as shown in Figure 1.

## USE & SAFETY

### Population Growth and Commute Trends

Nearly half of Maine's growth in population over the last decade occurred in York County placing a tremendous burden on the regional transportation network. Not only are there more people using the roads, but they are driving more miles. In the last decade, York County experienced a 13.5% increase in population<sup>1</sup>, while the total number of Vehicle Miles Traveled increased by just over 20%.<sup>2</sup>

Changes in commuting patterns have increased the number of cars on town roads. U.S. Census figures show that between 1990 and 2000 there was a dramatic increase in commute time for Acton residents, especially when compared to neighboring communities and York County as a whole as indicated in Table 2.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census 2000

<sup>2</sup> Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT)

**Table 2. Regional Population and Commute Time Patterns**

	1990 Population	1990 Commute Time	2000 Population	2000 Commute Time	Population Change 1990-2000	Commute Time Change 1990-2000
Acton	1,727	28.1	2,145	36.1	418	8.0
Lebanon	4,282	27.4	5,083	30.2	801	2.8
Newfield	1,042	31.1	1,328	37.8	286	6.7
Sanford	20,385	19.3	20,806	23.0	421	3.8
Shapleigh	1,911	29.0	2,326	34.9	415	5.9
York County	164,587	21.8	186,742	25.8	22,155	4.0

Source: US Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP)

Also notable, the survey conducted for the development of this Comprehensive Plan indicated that 36% of the respondents considered proximity to employment “not at all important.” Table 3 lists the top 20 places where Acton residents work, as documented by the US Census.

**Table 3. Place of Work of Acton Residents**

Place of Work of Residents	Number	Percent Of Total
Sanford	204	21.7%
Acton	152	16.1%
Other Locations	115	12.2%
Rochester, NH	52	5.5%
Saco	47	5.0%
Wells	36	3.8%
North Berwick	32	3.4%
Kennebunk	28	3.0%
Biddeford	25	2.7%
Dover, NH	25	2.7%
Lebanon	21	2.2%
Shapleigh	20	2.1%
Portsmouth, NH	20	2.1%
Alfred	19	2.0%
York	17	1.8%
South Portland	16	1.7%
Kittery	15	1.6%
Portland	14	1.5%
Ogunquit	14	1.5%
Waterboro	10	1.1%

Source: US Census

Table 4 shows the decrease in the number of people carpooling, bicycling, or walking to work.

**Table 4: Mode of Transportation to Work for Acton Workers 16 Years and Older**

Transportation Mode	1990	2000
Drove Alone	75.8%	83.5%
Carpooled	17.6%	11.9%
Public Transportation (including taxicab)	0.4%	0.0%
Bicycle or Walked	2.2%	0.7%
Motorcycle or other Means	0.3%	0.0%
Worked at Home	3.8%	3.8%

Source: US Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP)

There are limited alternatives to the personal vehicle for Acton residents. There are three informal park-and-ride lots in town: at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Route 109, on Twin Ridge, and in the schoolyard. For transit, York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) provides limited service to Acton residents on only one day per week.

### Traffic Volumes

Traffic counts measure the number of vehicles traveling by a fixed spot in a given time period. Typically, a volume is recorded every 15 minutes and totaled for the day. The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) regularly counts traffic throughout the state. The counts are factored based upon the time of year the actual count was taken, which results in an Average Annualized Daily Traffic (AADT) volume. Table 5 shows recent AADTs from MaineDOT and those included in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan.

**Table 5: Historical Traffic Volumes, Average Annualized Daily Traffic (AADT)**

	1987 AADT	1991 Growth Rate	2000 (projected AADT)	2000 (actual AADT)
Canal Road near NH State Line	720	4.2%	1,229	N/A
Foxes Ridge Road near Lebanon TL	900	3.8%	1,462	N/A
Foxes Ridge Road near NH State Line	900	3.8%	1,462	660
H Road north of Route 109	460	4.6%	825	700
Milton Mills Road near NH State Line	370	2.4%	504	790 (1997)
Milton Mills Road east of Sanborn Road	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,100
Milton Mills Road west of Route 109	1,430	5.4%	2,833	N/A
Route 109 near Shapleigh Town Line	4,640	3.8%	7,535	4,561
Route 109 north of Milton Mills Road	2,720	3.4%	4,201	2,980
Sam Page Road east of Route 109	1,480	5.1%	2,826	N/A

Source: Maine Department of Transportation, 1991 Acton Comprehensive Plan



## Safety

Although the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has not classified any intersections or road segments in Acton as a “High Crash Location,” there are a number of locations in town identified by the Comprehensive Planning Committee as safety concerns. These are:

- Route 109/Milton Mills Road has experienced an increase in traffic volume, largely due to the store located at the corner. Vehicle crashes are common at this location. Driver behavior is thought to be a major part of the problem.
- Route 109/Sanborn Road
- Route 109/Young’s Ridge Road has limited site distance looking west from Young’s Ridge Road.
- Milton Mills Road/Sanborn Road has been the site of a couple of major vehicle crashes.
- Route 109 at the base of Mousam Lake has limited site distance and has experienced increased traffic volumes.

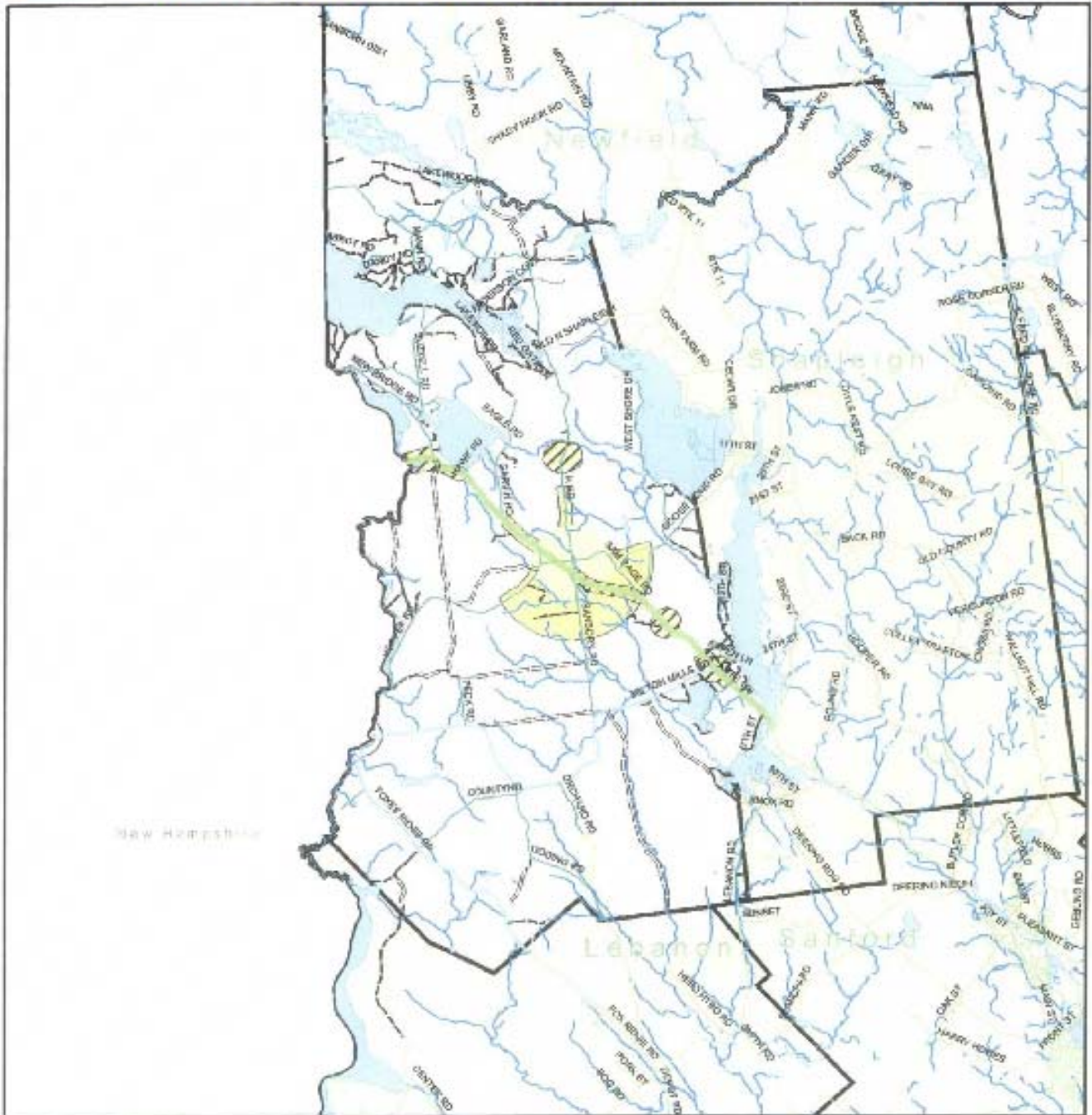
## Access Management

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) adopted a set of access management rules in 2002 in response to the enactment of An Act to Ensure Cost Effective and Safe Highways in the State by the Legislature in 2000, which addressed arterial capacity, poor drainage, and the high number of driveway-related crashes. The rules regulate sight distance, corner clearance, spacing, width, setbacks, parking, drainage, and mitigation requirements. They can be viewed in detail at <http://www.state.me.us/mdot/planning/bureauweb/accesslinks.htm>. Under these rules, in order to obtain a permit from MaineDOT, any new or changed driveway or entrance on state and state-aid highways located outside urban compact areas must meet specifications described in the rules.

The rules are organized into a four-tier system with regulation of driveways and entrances increasing for roads with higher mobility importance and poorer safety records. The following designations for Acton’s highway network are shown in Figure 3.

1. Basic Safety Standards apply to all state and state-aid roads. (Fox Ridge Road, Lebanon Road, Milton Mills Road, and Route 109)
2. Major Collector and Arterial Standards provide more regulation for *entrances* onto major collector and arterial roads. (Route 109)
3. Mobility corridors connect service centers and/or urban compact areas and carry at least 5000 vehicles per day along at least 50% of the corridor’s length. (none in Acton)
4. Retrograde arterials are mobility corridors where the number of crashes related to a driveway or entrance exceeds the statewide average for arterials with the same posted speed. (none in Acton)

**Figure 3**  
**Roadways Regulated by MDOT's Access Management Rules**



**Legend**

Major Corridor if Access Management Apply	Waterbodies
Basic Safety Standards Apply	Streams
Private Roads	Waste Area
Dispersed Roads	Transition Area
Abandoned Roads	Dispersed Zones
	Wood Use Zone

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

**SOUTHERN MAINE  
REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION**  
12/2/2004

Sources: Maine Office of GIS & Maine Department of Transportation

## **SUMMARY DISCUSSION**

- A thorough review of Town records is needed to determine the legal status of those roads depicted as “abandoned” in Figure 1.
- Acton Ridge Road, H Road, Sanborn Road, and Hopper Road are classified by Maine DOT as local roads, but function as collectors locally. The Town could develop another class of local design standards for these roads to be able to handle more traffic than the local roads. The Town could also request that MaineDOT review these roads to see if the Federal Functional Classification should be revised.
- There is no regulatory guidance at this time that allows the Town to limit development on certain roads, such as substandard private roads, roads that the Town does not maintain year-round, or roads that have been abandoned or discontinued by the Town. Since 1991, approximately half of the building permits issued were for development on camp roads and roads in “poor” or “deteriorating” condition. As more new residences are built on poor or deteriorating roads, and seasonal residences on camp roads are converted to year-round use, the demand for better roads follows. Requests to pave roads that are currently gravel, upgrade private roads to Town standards, and maintain (plow) roads that were formerly closed in winter months all increase the public’s cost and could encourage more development in areas of town where limiting development is desired.
- Two bridges in Acton, which are maintained by the Town, are in “serious” condition (Federal Sufficiency Ratings of 30.3 and 39.1 on a scale of 0-100).
- US Census data indicates that Acton residences are driving longer to get to work, indicating a need to maintain mobility on major routes out of town, especially Route 109. It may also be beneficial to consider commuter alternatives such as park-and-ride lots and economic development strategies that would provide an in-town livelihood to more Acton residents.
- Traffic volume information for Acton is very limited. Milton Mills Road, near the New Hampshire State Line, is the only documented location in Acton where traffic growth exceeded the 1991 projections for the year 2000.
- Continuing coordination with MaineDOT regarding the locations having local safety concerns should take place to determine if transportation improvements such as signage, intersection realignments, or other activities that would improve site distance would have a positive affect on public safety.
- Depending upon the density and types of uses that will be encouraged in Acton’s Village and Transition areas, MaineDOT’s Access Management rules may conflict with the community’s desired build-out scenario. Consideration needs to be given to preserving right-of-way and encouraging the development of service roads if commercial and/or high-density residential development is anticipated.

## Chapter IX

### Goals, Policies and Strategies

#### Land Use

##### Land Use Goals/Policies/Strategies

Acton is a rural community and it is clear that the townspeople would like to see it stay that way. As noted, the prior plan (which was approved) established a village and transitional growth area - which was later rejected at Town Meeting in the form of an ordinance change. A majority of the discussions within this update have focused once again on creating a village zone.

It should be noted Acton does not currently have what could be called a real village. The Town Hall, Fire Station, church, post office and some recreational facilities are in close proximity, however residential density is spread throughout the town. In fact, if a village exists it might be found along the lakefronts. It also appears from a reading of the limited survey results, that residents are not uniform in their favor towards developing a village center. However, these results also showed a favor for the preservation of open space and rural character.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee is attempting to balance those concerns. Without town water and/or sewer the prospect and potential for developing a typical New England Village seems somewhat remote. However, the Comprehensive Planning Committee has seen gradual residential sprawl impact the rural areas of Acton. To that end the Committee has proposed what they hope is the beginning of some increased density in the center of Town. The Committee also has proposed to develop a transitional area and following state guidelines, a rural and critical rural zone. In the end, the Committee hopes to present a land use plan, which working in concert with a differential growth cap, will slowly help Acton develop in a more concentric manner. The actual growth that results from these efforts will be closely examined over the next few years.

The developable land analysis showed the potential for approximately 5,500 more housing units based on two acre zoning spread throughout the town. The new plan would allow fewer lots but in a more concentrated manner, resulting in more efficient use of land while protecting rural resources.

With the lack of an existing village, the Committee believes a **differential** growth cap which provides for sustainable development opportunities is justifiable. The proximity of the town to Sanford and the availability of housing and rental opportunities within Sanford, has led the Committee to believe that on a regional level, a differential growth cap in Acton may direct growth to the service center of Sanford which also has the infrastructure to handle new growth. Acton is in most respects a suburb of Sanford and a rural suburb at that. **A cap which restricts growth in rural areas to a range of 30-40 homes a year, while allowing for uncapped village growth, is a level of growth** which

over time would exceed Acton's growth in any ten year period in the history of the community. Without any cap, unrestrained growth in Acton would create a tremendous burden on a small community which must support its own school and provide services for a growing and more elderly population. The key part of the growth plan for Acton will be to ensure that the growth of the town, while possibly limited to about 350 homes over the next decade, occurs in a manner which preserves the rural character of the community which so many residents have come to enjoy. To that end, the Committee hopes to amend the growth cap and differentiate between the critical rural sections of the town and the more concentric plan for growth near the "center" of Acton.

The Committee closely examined the feasibility of setting up the growth and transitional growth areas. These concentric areas will be more highly defined in the implementation process. However, it is clear that adequate provision has been made in these areas for future growth. The Committee not only examined the land that was not suitable for development but also the areas most suitable based on septic suitability mapping. These areas are shown on the following pages.

The table below summarizes the amount of developable land by these two growth areas (already developed land has been accounted for in this analysis):

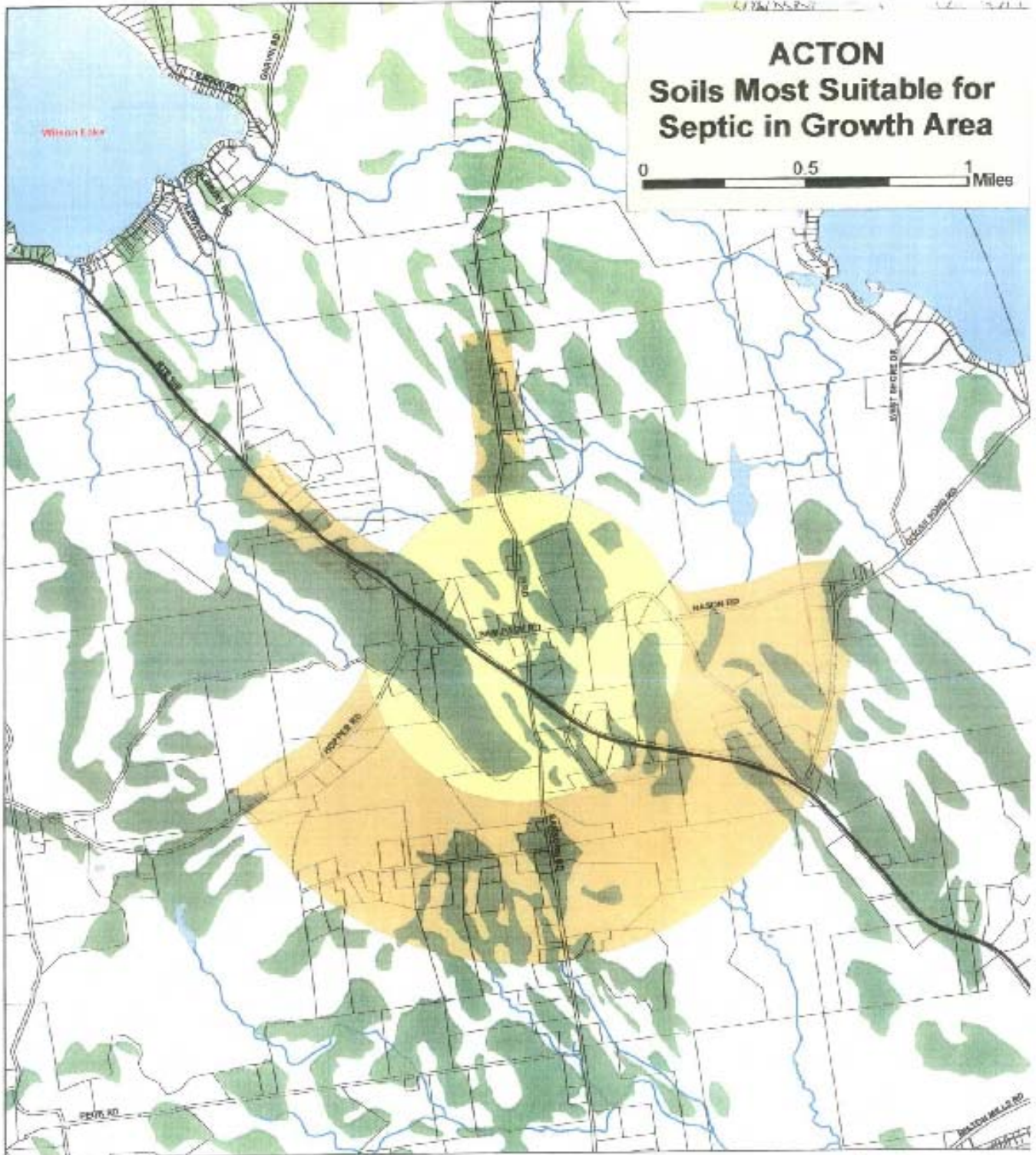
	Total Acreage	Total Acres of Developable Land	% of Land That is Developable
Village Area	496	251	51%
Transition Area	859	353	41%
Combined areas	1355	604	45%

Based on proposed zoning changes over 200 homes could be built in the "village" area and about 150 in the transitional area. (This transitional area can also be easily expanded). This accounts for close to 350 possible new dwelling units in these zones alone - **about the 350 which have been built town-wide over the past decade.**

The village area was developed with the following factors in mind:

- Adequate transportation network; easy access to service center of Sanford
- Existing facilities within the proposed village or nearby such as Town Hall, Church, recreational facilities, post office, fire/rescue building, and higher density of dwellings, small library
- Adequate soils for septic disposal
- Elements of a village already in place such as smaller lots, buildings close to street

The transitional area was chosen because:



# ACTON Soils Most Suitable for Septic in Growth Area

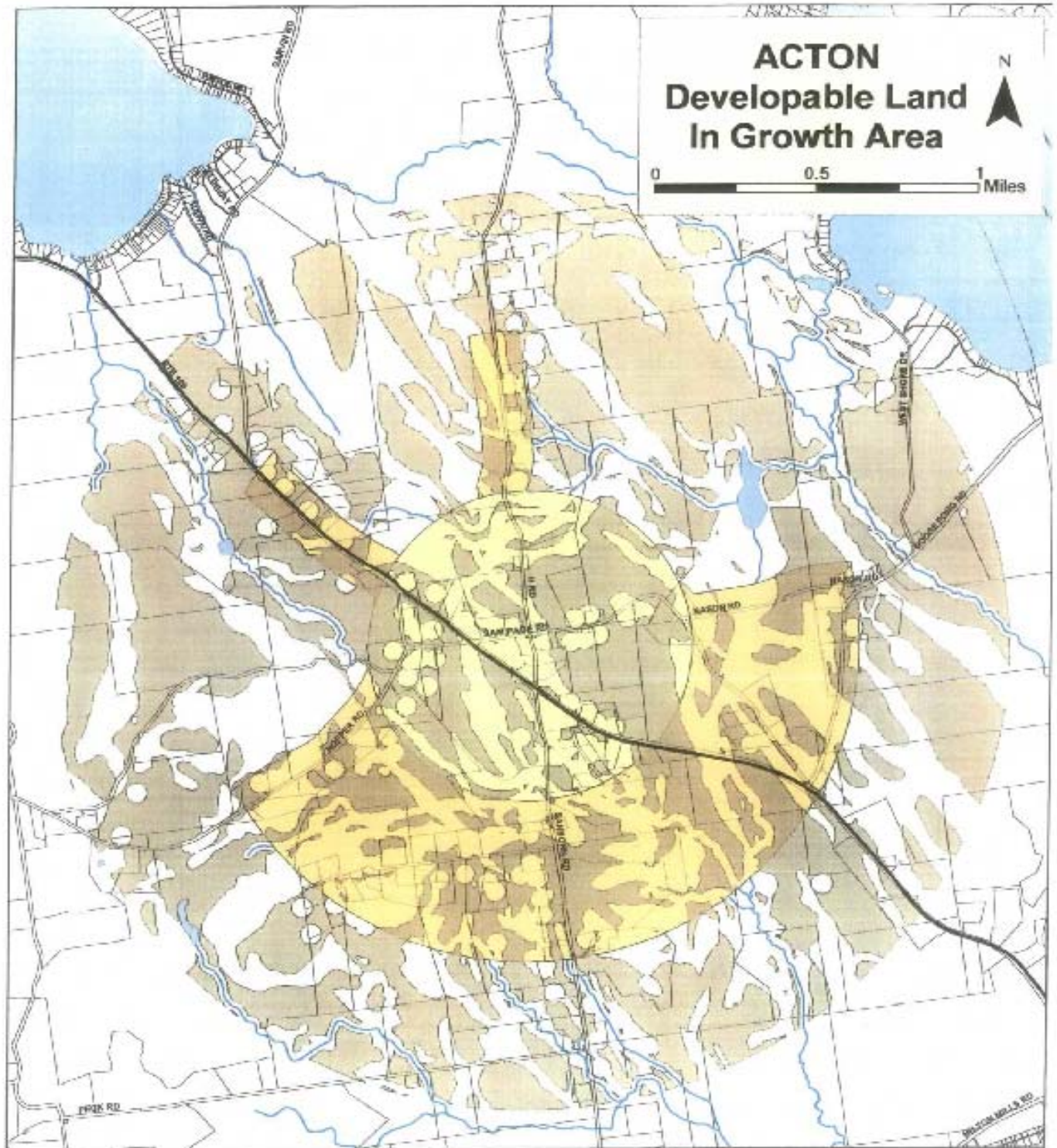
0 0.5 1 Miles

**Legend**

- Stream
- Lakes, Ponds, and Inlets
- Soils most suitable for septic
- Village Area (1-acre minimum lot size)
- Transition Area (2-acre minimum lot size)
- Tax Parishes



Prepared by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. For planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



# ACTON Developable Land In Growth Area

0 0.5 1 Miles



**Legend**

- Contours
- Rivers, Ponds, and Lakes
- Developable Land
- Transition Area (2-acre minimum lot size)
- Village Area (1-acre minimum lot size)
- Tax Parcels

\*Developable Land includes all land that is not in public ownership, within a 3-acre buffer surrounding existing residential locations, or constrained by streams, stream buffers (75 ft), ponds, pond buffers (200 ft), rivers, river buffers (250 ft), wetlands, 100 year floodplain, hylic soils, steep slopes and wetlands.

Produced by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission for planning purposes only. Roads, waterbodies & streams courtesy of Maine Office of GIS.



- There was adequate transportation networks and opportunities to create through roads
- Expandability based on roads and soils
- Incorporates smaller, existing and undeveloped parcel

The other method to guide growth was to include disincentives to develop land on a large scale in the rural and critical rural areas of town. Primarily this includes larger lots sizes as outlined below, using natural resources to calculate density, as well as discouraging subdivision activity. This includes using Beginning with Habitat (BWH) data as a starting point for development reviews, deducting poor soils, wetlands, and steep slopes from minimum lot size calculations, increasing lot size requirements, and requiring cluster development concepts for subdivision proposals. The Committee proposed to set defined open space set aside ratios in both the critical rural and rural areas. Finally, in addition to setting the boundaries for the critical rural areas based on BWH data the town also set a critical rural area in the northern part of town based on watershed boundaries and undeveloped areas surrounding some of the towns only remaining undeveloped great ponds.

The town also plans to create a small village zone as part of the existing village at Milton Mills. This is a small traditional New England Village which spans the border/river with New Hampshire and actually contains a small commercial area on the New Hampshire side of the border. The zoning would be similar to that envisioned for Acton Village.

The provision for increased commercial opportunities within these growth areas (Acton Village and Milton Mills) was also discussed. While residents are not in favor of large scale commercial development, the concept of an essential services category (for uses such as hardware, convenience, professional services, office, etc) for the newly developed growth area is being proposed. It is also proposed that this zone have mixed use capabilities (such as allowances for accessory apartments).

After a great deal of debate the town has moved forward with a concept to designate commercial and low impact commercial/industrial areas. This would include a Site Plan Review Ordinance and Committee. **The town has decided to abandon the concept of a “floating” commercial/industrial zone.** In addition, a commercial zone with more permitted uses than the village zone is also proposed along Rte. 109. This might include gas stations, retail, restaurants and lodging. **The location of this zone will be clustered near the few existing commercial establishments in town (and seen on the Future Land Use Map).** It will not include large scale uses such as manufacturing, auto dealerships or junkyards. The Committee fully understands the need for proper design and access management standards along this roadway. For instance, the more scenic portions of the roadway have been removed from the commercial designation. The town also plans to develop local access management guidelines to prevent numerous curb cuts and the “clustering” of businesses. Design standards related to parking, landscaping and signage will also be developed for this area. In addition a small commercial zone is also being proposed to service the lakes and the numerous summer residents who can be



found there from May through September. This will be a zone primarily designed for essential services **as described for the village zones, but also allow for convenience stores** and other enterprises designed to service a summer community. It is hoped such a zone might attract some of the summer residents who might spend their money in New Hampshire or Sanford and also reduce the need for traveling to either of those locations for basic necessities.. These areas will also be protected with additional environmental safeguards related to water usage, impervious surfaces, and phosphorous control measures. Thus uses such as lodging, restaurants and/or laundries will be discouraged.

**The town will also seek to aggressively work with Maine DOT on ensuring access management standards are adhered to along these commercial sections of roadway. This includes limiting curb cuts, developing joint access provisions and frontage roads and establishing future right of ways for access at defined locations.**

Finally, a commercial/light industrial zone has been proposed for the area just north of the village center on the H-Road. This area contains the transfer station and also has adequate access and road conditions for some industrial usage. Of course, on-site water and sewer would need to be supplied and the road is also posted for the spring season. The town will need to carefully define the uses which will be permitted in such a zone. **This would be a zone which would potentially allow for metal working, car sales and automotive repair, larger scale woodworking operations and other industries.**

**It should also be pointed out that Acton, like many smaller Maine communities has large numbers of home occupations. The town proposes to maintain that lifestyle and continue to allow home occupations throughout the community based on their current standards.**

Finally, it should be pointed out that the town plans to form a new Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to oversee the various responsibilities outlined in this plan. Such Committee would be formed upon passage of the plan.

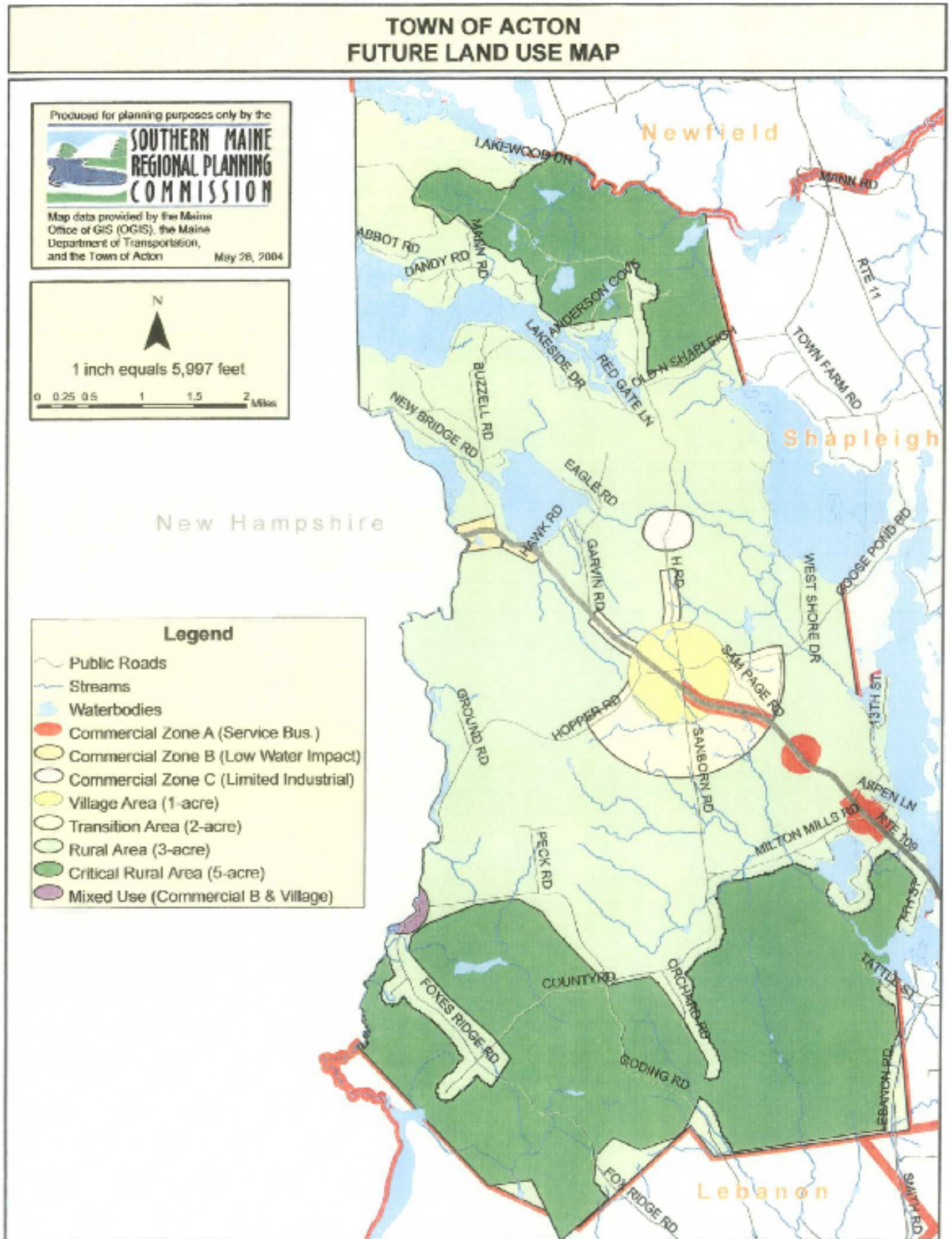
The following outlines the goals, policies and strategies for land use in Acton. The generalized Future Land Use Map can be seen on the following page.

**Goal: To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of the community.**

Policy # 1. Balance areas of growth between clearly established “rural village zones” and forest/farm and rural zones.

Strategies:

1. Within the designated village growth area and on suitable soils, reduce the minimum lot size (currently two acres) to one acre and also reduce frontage requirements (150 feet or less). Allow mixed uses and “village” related uses, as **described above.**



**Responsibility: Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC)**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Create a two acre transitional residential area as shown on the future land use map (400 feet in depth from existing roadways as shown). Frontage to be 150-200 feet.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

3. Create a two acre Rural Residential Zone as shown on the future land use map. Frontage to be 250 feet.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

4. Create a Critical Rural area as shown on the future land use map. Incorporate various standards within this zone to preserve natural resource systems and discourage large-scale development. Adopt a five-acre minimum lot size for this zone. Frontage to be 300-350 feet.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

5. **Maintain existing building cap system until a new differential cap is developed (as described below) and approved or until a period of three years has elapsed (whichever comes first).**
6. **Establish a differential building cap which establishes thresholds for development outside of the village area while not limiting growth within the proposed village. Thresholds outside of the village area will fall within a range of 30-40 units per year.**

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

7. Review permit number annually and revise number based on existing and future conditions.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

8. Develop subdivision standards for the village and transitional areas which encourage pedestrian and bike friendly travel ways.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

Policy # 2: Discourage large subdivisions in the critical rural and rural parts of town.

Strategies:

1. Require developers in critical rural areas to present a conventional and open space development as part of a subdivision application. Same requirement applies to proposals in Rural Residential and Transitional Areas. Include provisions for including Beginning with Habitat data mapping as part of application review. Specifically allow Planning Board to require an Open Space Development in the designated areas. Ratios for preserved open space vs. developed lands shall be:

- Within Critical Rural Area the ratio is 60% open space vs. 40% developed
- In Rural Area it is 50% vs. 50%
- In other areas it is negotiated by Board and developer

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Limit number of permits allowed within a given year in subdivisions in critical rural areas.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

3. Consider limiting the number of permits in subdivisions in rural residential areas.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

4. Deduct wetlands, steep slopes and areas of hydric soils for new divisions of property when calculating minimum lot size requirements in critical rural area. Require new lots within critical rural area to contain the minimum lot area of non-hydric and non-wetland soils and slopes of less than 25%.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

Policy # 3: To provide opportunities for commercial and small-scale industrial growth which is keeping with the rural nature of Acton.

Strategies:

1. Establish commercial and light industrial zones as shown on the future Land Use Map.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

2. Provide incentives for clustered commercial development and disincentives for “strip” commercial development. Consider the following approaches (as a

minimum): restricting curb openings for new retail and service businesses to be located on the same lot in the Acton Corner area; allow larger scale development along Rte. 109 only if it meets the performance standards of provisions to be developed. Develop appropriate standards for the location of parking (to the side or rear of a proposed use) and landscaping standards for uses along 109; **strongly enforce and institutionalize the DOT rules on access management for development along Rte. 109.**

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Define commercial development and develop performance standards for noise, odors, pollution potential and traffic. Using established publications on small village design and use patterns and incorporate such uses into the village standards for Acton.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

4. Develop and refine commercial criteria for commercial area near the lakes to be based on factors related to soils, slope, impervious surface, phosphorous loading, and others.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

5. Develop a system of commercial use permitting which allows low impact uses (such as minor home occupations) to be reviewed by CEO only and other uses to receive a conditional use or Site Plan review (see below) depending on size and complexity of project.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

6. Develop/adopt a Site Plan Review ordinance and Committee which considers the environmental, historical and unique cultural aspects of larger commercial or industrial proposals within the town. The Committee will be comprised of local officials and Board members.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

7. Establish enhanced performance standards for major commercial projects.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

8. Encourage and develop standards for “home occupations” which allows residents to develop “cottage industries” with minimal impact on neighborhood character. Allow home occupations in Shoreland Zones with CEO approval.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

9. Create an “essential services” category (hardware stores, small groceries, pharmacy, convenience items, personal services) which can be integrated into a new village area.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

Policy # 4: Ensure that new development in Acton – particularly in the rural areas – is in keeping with the character and culture of the community.

Strategies:

1. Maintain wooded buffers along streetscapes whenever new subdivisions are proposed in rural parts of town.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

2. Require buffers when new subdivisions or other projects are proposed adjacent to farming operations or wood lots.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Maintain current standards for home occupations, particularly those which have a natural resource based focus.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

## **Housing**

### Housing/Goals/Policies/Strategies

As noted in the housing inventory section, about 35 houses/units would need to be sold over the next decade at below \$106,000 to address the 10% goal of affordable housing in Acton. The town is fully aware of this need but also understands that local contractors and developers will most likely not address this need on their own.

The town is proposing a few initiatives to gain ground on the affordable housing issue. These are being undertaken with the realization that Acton is aging at a more rapid rate than most York County communities and the demand for affordable elderly housing is likely to grow. It is also true that a number of affordable homes may also be found in Sanford less than 8 miles away. The town proposes to finalize a location to comply with the state Mobile Home Park Law which might present a number of affordable housing opportunities. This area would be located in the transitional residential area and opens up about 400 acres to this potential affordable housing opportunity. The town plans to develop standards for accessory apartments which are less restrictive than those currently in place. The town also plans to research the suitability of possible sites for affordable elderly housing on sites which may become available through tax foreclosure. It should also be noted that affordable elderly housing is exempt from the towns' growth cap. Finally, the town believes that smaller lot sizes in the village area might result in lower prices for both land and ultimately finished homes.

**Goal: To meet the state requirements for addressing affordable housing need in Acton in the next decade.**

#### Policy 1: Create additional housing opportunities through diversity of housing types.

1. Incorporate into the zoning ordinance new standards for the development of a mobile home park based on state guidelines. Based on the future land use map, permit such possible development in the transitional residential zone only.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Examine and implement standards for the development of accessory apartments on reduced lot sizes within the new village area (i.e., permit these apartments without requiring additional acreage as long as soils are suitable and septic systems can be properly designed).

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

3. Continue to monitor on a yearly basis the costs of housing in Acton as compared to the region and also to the needs and incomes of Acton residents.

**Responsibility: CPIC**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**

4. Consider adopting less restrictive minimum lot size requirements for projects which promote affordable elderly housing (for instance a density of 1.5 units per acre in the village area if suitable soils can be found).

**Responsibility: CPIC**  
**Time Frame: 2005**

Policy 2: Increase town role in examining and providing for affordable housing and other housing impacts.

- 1. Continue to require permitting for seasonal conversions.** Track the number, size and location of seasonal conversions occurring within Acton and attempt to determine impacts on municipal services/public facilities, **affordable housing** and also how this may impact the existing growth cap.
- 2. Provide for better coordination between the Town Clerk, CEO, and Selectman during elections to adequately determine legal residents and those who have converted.**
- 3. Notice seasonal residents through tax bills of the need for growth permits when converting to year round residences**

**Responsibility: CEO/CPIC**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**

1. Examine opportunities to encourage affordable elderly housing utilizing land owned by the town of Acton.

**Responsibility: CPIC/Selectmen**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**

2. Research and develop standards for assisted living facilities which might be appropriate in scale for a community such as Acton.

**Responsibility: CPIC**  
**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Maintain the current exemption within the growth cap for affordable housing.

**Responsibility: CPIC**  
**Time Frame: 2006**

4. Seek CDBG funds for a regional affordable housing study with the towns of Newfield and Shapleigh. Invite participation from Sanford for the study.

**Responsibility: CPIC**  
**Time frame: 2007**



## **Public Facilities and Services**

### Public Facilities/Goals/Policies/Strategies

As a small town of approximately 2,100 residents, the demand for services and public facilities in Acton may appear somewhat modest. Acton seems to have adequate facilities in the areas of recreation, public safety and highway related equipment. The town is still small enough so that issues related to police services, compensating firefighters, additional space at town hall (although more storage is needed), and hiring additional administrative personnel is still not necessary. That may be an issue for the next plan, however, when the towns population might be in the neighborhood of 2,500 or more. The addition of a large seasonal population makes the provision of local facilities and services a bit more problematic, although at this time it does not appear as if these seasonal residents demand a great deal in the way of local services. Again, that could change by the time of the next update of this plan.

For the near term, the town will need to address the needs of expanding school programs. Accomplishing this will be greatly aided by this plan, but also by additional input from citizens and various committees within the community. A more structured public process to determine the options for a school would seem to be a necessity for a project of this scope. Similarly, with the number of roads in town and the need for maintenance of these roads, a process which includes ideas developed through this plan and outlined in the transportation section need to be incorporated into the town's roadway planning process.

Furthermore, as the town continues to grow over the next decade, the issue of additional personnel- both for public safety and in Town Hall – is certain to need an examination.

The town has also been actively involved on the regional level with the group of ten towns in northern York County as they seek governmental efficiencies. While no firm ideas on capital planning have merged from that group, the ongoing meetings and discussion may lead to an actual project further down the line. As these towns grow, (and for the most part are of similar size), it would appear that some personnel needs (such as assessing) might be addressed jointly. An analysis of capital needs by SMRPC (such as recreational facilities, schools, fire and emergency services, transfer stations) has shown that most of these facilities have been built and services are being provided on a town by town level with several mutual aid agreements in place. However, some gaps in fire and rescue services might appear as the town grows in the future. The town is encouraged to continue tier activity with this regional effort and seek economies of scale for both services and facilities. Working with the school on recreational facilities for instance, provides a cost savings and centralizes activities.

An outline of a capital investment strategy is seen on the page 12. What this highlights is the necessity of the need to deal with the issue of school expansion. This would be a monumental capital cost for the town and might make other capital items less tenable. Funds for open space preservation (which might be used to match state or non-profit open

space funds) received a positive response in the survey which was conducted last year. The bridge replacements might be an unavoidable cost in the future.

**Goal: Ensure the development of public facilities and services which reflects community needs and are reflective of existing and projected community growth.**

Policy 1: Ensure the input of appropriate community decision makers and municipal officials as the town examines facilities and services in the future.

Strategy:

1. Conduct a thorough review of existing committees and Boards within the Town of Acton to ensure that they are being utilized in a manner that best serves the interests of the Town. Consider revising mission statements, updating membership, and/or creating new committees where appropriate.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Examine need for either full time or full time equivalent staff person for Fire Department.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2006**

Policy 2: Work with surrounding communities on examining possible cost savings on the regional level.

Strategy

1. Continue to meet with the ten town group of northern York County and examine efficiencies in the areas of personnel and capital needs which might arise as the communities grow in the future.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

## **Fiscal Capacity**

### Fiscal Capacity/Goals/Policies/Strategies

For the most part the town is good financial condition. The undesignated surplus amount falls generally within recommended guidelines as does the amount of debt the town currently holds. As noted above the town should consider a more-well defined process to address capital needs both in the short and long term. The long- term fiscal stability of the town could be altered by the possibility of paying for an expanded school. This would add significantly to the town's debt ratio. The town might also begin to examine a system of impact fees for capital items related to parks, recreation and open space. As the town budgets for its own school, the town is also more suited to possibly develop an impact fee system to help pay for that school (as opposed to a consolidated school district). However, with a building permit limit per year it is questionable how much revenue could be raised through a building permit impact fee to help offset an expanded school cost (unless the fee was extremely high).

**Goal: To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth.**

Policy: Develop ongoing system for development of Capital Improvements Plan for insertion into yearly town budget.

### Acton Capital Investment Strategy

Acton is a small community of approximately 2,100 people, but with a budget which must take into account a K-8 School, and also finding a place for high school students to attend grades 9-12. In addition the town must maintain a fairly extensive roadway network. In other respects, such as recreational facilities, the town is in good shape as far as capital needs. The town also budgets for road improvements as part of the yearly budget, not as a capital item. However, the need for additional school space seems to dwarf these other issues and items.

The following is a list of suggested capital items (or planning needs) over the next five years which will enable the town to address existing and potential capital needs based on the existing growth rate:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Need</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
<b>2005</b>	Study of School Expansion Possibilities	\$30,000	School Board	
	Transfer Station Roof	\$20,000	Selectman	Taxation
	Open Space Account	\$15,000	Selectman	Taxation
<b>2006</b>	Bridge Rehab/Replacement	\$200,000	Selectman	DOT/Town
	Open Space Account	\$15,000	Selectman	Taxation
	Study of Town Hall/Public Facilities Space Needs	\$15,000	CIP Comm.	Taxation
<b>2007</b>	Open Space Account	\$15,000	Selectman	Taxation
<b>2008</b>	Salt/Sand/Shed Repair/Replacement	\$30,000	Selectman	Grants/Town
	Squad Car (Fire)	\$20,000	Selectman	Taxation
<b>2009</b>	Bridge Rehab/Replacement	\$200,000*	Selectman	DOT/Town
<b>2010</b>	Thermal Imaging System	\$25,000	Selectman	Donations/Town
	School Expansion	??????		
<b>2011</b>	Open Space Account	\$15,000	Selectman	Taxation
<b>2012</b>	Fire Engine	\$200,000	Selectman	Bond
<b>2013</b>	Open Space Account	\$15,000	Selectman	Taxation
<b>Total Investment (without school)</b>		<b>\$820,000</b>		

Strategies:

1. Reinststitute the CIP Committee to involve all municipal and safety officials.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Continue with the arrangement with MERC for solid waste disposal unless a better alternative is found.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame:Ongoing**

3. Account for money that may be needed to match state and/or federal funds for transportation improvement projects. See Transportation Policy 3, Strategy 2.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

4. Set aside funding in the CIP to enhance and/or encourage land conservation efforts.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

5. Continue to use and maintain the town's GIS database and apply for funds when possible.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

Policy: Investigate additional methods to finance needed capital improvements resulting from growth and development in the area.

Strategies:

1. Consider adopting impact fees to finance additional town facilities/improvements necessitated by additional residential development, particularly in the areas of parks and recreation.

**Responsibility: CIP Committee/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2006**

2. Focus town CIP investments, particularly road way investments, in areas targeted for growth. Within road program consider effects of road paving policies on future development (such as paving or upgrading rural roadways which might spur residential growth.

**Responsibility: CIP Committee/Road Commissioner**

**Time Frame: 2005**

3. Develop language for determining off-site improvements to be paid for by developers for insertion into Subdivision and/or Site Plan review ordinance. This may also include fee-in-lieu of improvements for certain improvements.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

4. Develop policy for requiring rural roadways to be upgraded in projects in rural parts of town. Refer to transportation policies.

**Responsibility: CIP Committee/Road Commissioner**

**Time Frame:**

5. Continue to participate in cooperative purchasing programs of SMRPC and investigate new ideas for cooperative purchasing (such as large capital items).

**Responsibility: Selectmen**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**

6. Maintain existing mutual aid agreements with surrounding communities.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**

## **Land and Water Resources**

### Land and Water Resources Goals/Policies/Strategies

The long term protection of Acton's natural resources may be the most critical component of this plan. The character and rural setting of the community make it the reason most people live there and also why it is under tremendous growth pressure as well. A representative for a recent subdivider in town stated that he has seen tremendous demand for land amongst recreational enthusiasts in the Acton area. Most of the inquiries were from out of state residents seeking a few acres for a vacation home.

The town must come to consensus as it attempts to retain its natural resource base, preserve property rights and allow for growth in the future. The future land use plan as detailed above will be a step in that direction. Many of the strategies below (including a number of non-regulatory strategies) will also help to preserve the town's rural identity and culture.

The work towards preserving wildlife habitat, wetlands and forest lands has been greatly aided by the work started in Beginning with Habitat. Future efforts will also be greatly supported by what is now, two Land Trusts working in the region - the Mousam Way Land Trust principally covering Sanford/Springvale and the Three Rivers Land Trust covering the five town region of Acton, Alfred, Shapleigh, Lebanon and Sanford. Additionally there are active lake associations in the region who have been vigilant monitors of the water quality of Acton's many ponds and lakes. All of these groups, together with a newly reconstituted Conservation Commission (suggested below) present a working background by which to develop strategies for natural resource protection outside of the traditional methods of zoning and development review.

The lakes associations have a critical role to play in the long term plans to protect the town's most valuable asset – its lakes and the income they represent to the community. Their efforts can be augmented with additional provisions in the Site Plan and Subdivision regulations which establish phosphorous control provisions and added shoreland zoning requirements within the watersheds and shoreland areas of these water bodies. It is also recommended the towns work with their neighbors (Shapleigh and Newfield) as do the lake associations in strategies to protect the water quality of these resources. **Finally, with the additions to shoreland zoning as described below and in combination with an increase in minimum lot size requirements in areas around the lakes (from two to three acres) the town feels assured their water quality issues can be addressed.**

It is also recommended that the town play a more active role in land conservation. With the advent of the two land trusts in the region, numerous opportunities exist to coordinate and maximize scarce dollars for the protection of habitat, water resources and rural areas. Already a large easement on Hebo Hybo Road has been **obtained in the most rural part** of Acton, preserving a large unfragmented block of habitat. While this was done without municipal involvement, the result was the protection of an area that is now being

proposed as a critical rural area. With additional town resources as described below, these types of projects could increase and directly benefit the town and region. Through these recommendations, the goal is to increase the amount of money which might be used as leverage to fulfill the conservation needs of the town.

It is the realization of the Committee however, that non-regulatory means alone will not adequately protect the town's resources. To that end, additional changes have been recommended to shoreland zoning, aquifer protection and requirements to ensure that Beginning with Habitat data is included with development submittals. For instance, it is also recommended that the town utilize existing resources and agencies, such as the York County Soil and Water Conservation District, to assist in the review of natural resource based (and highly technical) data.

**Goal: To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the Town's water resources including lakes, aquifers, ponds and rivers.**

Policy 1 : Based on sound science, continue and expand efforts to protect water resources through local Planning Board review processes.

Strategies:

1. Identify which high yield aquifers should be protected for future water use.  
Consider locations of highest anticipated need. Examine quantity and quality of bedrock aquifer near town forest lands.

**Responsibility: CPIC/Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Establish aquifer protection zones over identified potential future water supplies.  
Develop increased groundwater protection measures within the zoning and subdivision ordinances for groundwater extraction activities, large subdivisions and commercial uses.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2005**

3. Establish **subdivision** performance standards for phosphorous mitigation in lake watersheds. **Such standards to be calculated according to the DEP methodology for assessing phosphorous impacts to watersheds.**

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

4. For the purpose of lake watershed protection, establish the same phosphorous protection levels as Shapleigh and Newfield on shared watersheds, **based on a determination that those standards are adequate for the protection of these shared watersheds.** Institute same development standards as a minimum.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**



5. Consider and implement, if feasible, the recommendations of Geologist John Rand, concerning changes to zoning and subdivision regulations for the protection of surface and groundwater quality.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time frame: 2006**

6. Conduct further study of wetland areas to define characteristics and acreage, improve identification and assess relative values.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission/Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2007**

7. Consider additional protection measures for smaller high value wetlands using State Planning Office/Beginning with Habitat data.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission/Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2007**

8. Limit development densities over high yield aquifers and vulnerable soil types.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

9. Ensure that erosion and storm water control measures are reviewed prior to approval of large development proposals and also inspected during the construction phase. Require approval of York County Soil and Water Conservation District where appropriate.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

10. Review and refine the mineral extraction operations section of the land use ordinance. Consider limiting such operations in critical rural zone.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2005**

11. Incorporate scenic views into the subdivision and site plan review process and also include as a basis for cluster development if appropriate (scenic views to be inventoried as part of Land and Water Resource Policy 2, Strategy 2 below).

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2005**

Policy 2: Examine all non-regulatory options to protect land and water resources while controlling sprawl at the same time.

Strategies:

1. Review the objectives of Acton's existing Conservation Committee. Consider renaming that Committee to be the Historical Conservation Commission and creating a new Land and Water Resource Conservation Commission.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Prepare a coordinated priority list of most valuable lands for wildlife, scenic and open space.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Develop an open space acquisition fund to be funded through yearly appropriations at Town Meeting, through sales of foreclosed properties and through the possible development of an open space impact fee.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

4. Consider fee-in-lieu of land requirement within subdivision regulations which permits Planning Board option to request funds be set aside for open space acquisition in circumstances where a land set aside does not accomplish conservation goals (such as for smaller subdivisions where an open space set aside may be only an acre or two).

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

5. Continue with Lake Monitoring Program and establish the Conservation Commission as the town lead on such an effort. Consider establishing a new appointed position of "Lake Quality Monitor" to coordinate water quality testing on the various lakes and ponds in town and to receive and maintain the water quality data.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

6. Promote the use of "best management practices" as advocated by the Soil and Water Conservation District for farming activities, timber harvesting, and both small and large scale development around water bodies.

**Responsibility: Planning Board/CEO/Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

7. Have yearly meetings of local Land Trusts with Selectmen and Planning Board.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

8. Continue to communicate with and support the efforts of the local lake association groups to educate and encourage environmentally friendly landscaping, septic

maintenance and homeowner's practices on and near Acton's lakes. **Continue the yearly efforts of the Mousam Lake Conservation Corps.**

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission and Lake Associations**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

9. Working with lake associations, conduct inventory of lakeside septic systems, and encourage testing and pumping of such systems. **Seek to address the flooding of older septic systems at Mousam Lake by developing a strategy in cooperation with the Lake Association.**

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission and Lake Associations**

**Time Frame: 2006**

10. **Work with Lake Associations to highlight the threats of invasive plants by increasing signage and running additional publicity campaigns in Lake Association newsletters.**

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission and Lake Associations**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

11. **Continue with the Boat inspection program underway in Town**

**Responsibility: Lake Associations**

**Time frame: Ongoing**

Policy 3: Work to preserve rare and endangered plant and animal habitat and other important natural resource systems within Acton and adjacent communities.

Strategies:

1. Use Beginning with Habitat data, and data from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to establish priority areas for habitat protection.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Work with adjoining towns and local Land Trusts to employ non-regulatory mechanisms to protect habitat that crosses town boundaries.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

3. Consider requiring joint review or notification of abutting municipalities when a project impacts habitat that crosses town boundaries.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

## **Outdoor Recreation**

### Outdoor Recreation Goals/Policies/Strategies

While the town currently has little in the way of dedicated open space, there are numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation on trails, water bodies and forest lands to which access has traditionally been provided. The town does own a Town Forest, which to this point has received little attention. The Recreation or Conservation Committees could help to develop a plan for that area.

Another charge to the committee's might be to establish or look at guidelines for ATV use in the community. ATV's were mentioned frequently in the survey and at public meetings as source of irritation amongst other recreational user groups.

These committee(s) might also help to coordinate the actions of the town with other non-profit groups such as land trusts in the region. Linkages to other public spaces and possible trail linkages could be examined. This examination could also be accomplished with a view of both non-regulatory and regulatory means to promote trail and open space linkages. For instance, the Planning Board might, more thoroughly examine trail opportunities which may arise as applications come before them. Working with the local land trusts and the mapping done for the Three Rivers Land Trust project, the potential for linkages through open space development proposals and through easements is enhanced. This is particularly important as it is now obvious that Acton is beginning to change from a lot by lot development pattern (outside of the subdivision process) to more projects appearing before the Planning Board for subdivision approval.

**Goal: To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for Acton residents, including access to surface waters.**

Policy: As referenced in Public Facilities and Services Section develop a committee or committees to aid the Board of Selectmen and Town departments in recreational opportunities and programming.

Strategies:

1. Encourage the appropriate local board(s) or committee(s) to pursue voluntary agreements, easements and other arrangements to allow new or continued use of land for recreation.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

2. Request the appropriate local board(s) or committee(s) to investigate potential public access, trails, and other recreational opportunities and to propose new

recreational programs and improvements. Consider long term plan for gradual expansion of recreational facilities.

**Responsibility: Conservation/Recreation Committee/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Pursue the purchase of usable lake frontage and consider this expenditure in future budget planning.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2006**

4. With the input of the appropriate local board(s) or committee(s), require large development proposals to provide an open space or recreation set aside and coordinate with community trail and open space needs. Where a given project is not large enough to require a set aside of recreational facilities or open space, establish a fee-in-lieu- of a set aside for these amenities.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

5. Set up a town account for monies set aside for recreation and open space.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

6. Consider an impact fee for purchasing needed recreational facilities and open space.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

7. Plan for use of town forest including the development of a trail system within the forest. Examine possible linkages with other open space parcels adjacent to or near the forest.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: 2007**

8. Examine the issues of shared or separate trails for motorized and non-motorized use.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

## **Critical Natural Resources**

### Critical Natural Resources Goals/Policies/Strategies

The critical natural resources in town have now been well documented through the Beginning with Habitat project and additional mapping from the Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. This information has been supplied to the local land trusts as well as to the town. It is important that this data become part of both the Planning Board's and the Code Enforcement Officers database and be used as development applications arrive in Town Hall. It is also important that with this new data the Planning Board use it to support additional studies in the areas of impact on wildlife and habitat. It is not the intention here to promote additional regulatory burdens on property owners or developers – however providing data and possible mitigation measures for impacts to these valued resources is well within the purview of the town.

What the Committee hopes to highlight to townspeople is both the non-regulatory and regulatory opportunities to protect the natural resources of Acton. Together, and with the additional data that is now available, ideas for land conservation (via easements or fee acquisition) are more easily evaluated and Planning Board/regulatory decisions are more defensible.

**Goal: To protect the town's critical natural resources, including shoreland areas, scenic views, wildlife habitat, rare and endangered plants and animals, unique natural areas and fisheries habitat.**

Policy: Use available regulatory and non-regulatory methods to protect the Town's critical natural resources.

Strategies:

1. Review existing Shoreland Zoning provisions. Increase minimum lot size requirements around undeveloped portions of ponds in Acton and increase existing minimum lot size requirements around IFW highly rated wetlands.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Incorporate Beginning with Habitat data on rare and endangered plant and animal species into the Planning Board review process (ie. develop standards for review of projects which contain rare and endangered plants/animals on site). Require consultation with the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for projects which include animal travel corridors, buffer areas and other significant natural features.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2005**

3. Work jointly with the local Land Trusts when subdivisions contain lands which might be preserved as open space.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

4. Work with Selectmen and all town departments to evaluate any foreclosed lands for conservation/recreation opportunities. If there are no opportunities, consider utilizing sale revenues for open space protection.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

5. Consider setting aside any tax penalties paid through withdrawal from the Tree Growth program to be used for possible open space purchases.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

## **Agriculture and Forestry**

### Agriculture and Forestry/Goals/Policies/Strategies

The towns agricultural and forestry history is under increasing threats. For the most part these threats are beyond the control of the town to control. For instance, increasing competition from global and national competition threatens the orchards; similar issues arise when discussing forestry and timber. However, it is possible, on the local level, to try to support the position of these rural industries. Encouraging use of the Farm and Forest Tax programs, the use of conservation easements and creative use of grant programs for farmland protection need to be utilized. Recent state initiatives regarding liquidation harvesting (and the subsequent subdividing of property) may help to reduce the current practice of timber harvesting followed by recreational subdivision development. Particularly important, for both wildlife and timber, is the protection of large unfragmented blocks of timberlands. The town, together with local land trusts should continue to seek ways to protect these blocks.

**Goal: To protect the town's agricultural and forest resources from increasing suburbanization and maintain these resources as a source of rural economic opportunity.**

Policy: Work to preserve the town's agricultural and silvicultural heritage through both regulatory and non-regulatory means.

#### Strategies:

1. Ensure that cluster development requirements continue to specify the protection of farmland and forest resources as a valid purpose for open space preservation.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

2. As part of buffering standards, require that new residential developments provide adequate setbacks for both farm and forestry operations.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Examine opportunities for either a local or regional farmers market within Acton or in combination with surrounding communities.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: 2005**



4. Encourage easements that prohibit development but also allow for long term sustainable forestry (such as the model established by the Nature Conservancy in Parsonsfield).

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission along with local land trusts**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

5. Actively encourage voluntary participation in the Tree Growth and Farm and Forest program.

**Responsibility: Board of Assessors**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

6. Work with York County Cooperative extension service and the Threshold to Maine RC and D on aiding farmers in developing value added farm products (such as for apples, etc).

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame 2007**

7. Encourage and permit alternative uses at existing farm locations (such as cross country skiing, horse rides, etc).

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

8. Continue the work of local land trusts in preserving working farms and working landscapes.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission/Local Land Trusts**

**Time Frame: 2006**

## **Historic and Archeological Resources**

### Historic and Archeological Resources Goals/Policies/Strategies

The town of Acton would appear to contain a great deal of historical assets. The history of the community itself goes back over two hundred years. The lakes, ponds and particularly the river systems in town would appear to be prime locations for prehistoric and/or archeological assets as well (these areas are rich in history in many other southern Maine communities). The town needs to better inventory these assets and provide support to the local Historical Society (or in this case what is called the Conservation Commission) to better inventory and map the towns built history and its possible archeological sites. It is important this information be provided to town decision makers such as the Planning Board and the CEO. It would also make sense to charge the Historical Society with that task alone and appoint a Conservation Commission to deal with issues related to land conservation.

**Goal: To preserve the Town's historic and archeological heritage.**

**Policy: Increase town involvement in the preservation of the town's unique cultural and historical assets.**

Strategies:

1. Provide support to a newly charged Historical Commission to inventory and map historical buildings and sites in town and make nominations for National Register or state landmark designations where appropriate. Make these resources available to Planning Board and Board of Selectmen.

**Responsibility: Board of Selectmen/Historical Commission**

**Time Frame: 2006**

2. Ensure that mapping and knowledge of historic and prehistoric archeological sites is known to Planning Board and CEO as they act on development proposals.

**Responsibility: Planning Board/CEO**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

3. Amend the Subdivision Regulations and insert in the proposed Site Plan Review Ordinance language which ensures that historical and archeological resources will be identified and if warranted, protected if found within a proposed development.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

4. Ensure that any alterations to town historic buildings do not diminish the historical value of such structures.

*Last updated 11/03/09*

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Historical Commission/CEO**  
**Time Frame: Ongoing**

## Transportation

### Transportation Goals/Policies/ Strategies

Transportation connects households with services, jobs, and other resources. It is important for the transportation system to be maintained in operable and safe condition. The Transportation Inventory identified two town-maintained bridges in Acton that are in “serious” condition (Federal Sufficiency Ratings of 30.3 and 39.1 on a scale of 0-100). Additionally, the Inventory noted that continuing coordination with MaineDOT regarding the locations having local safety concerns should take place to determine if transportation improvements such as signage, intersection realignments, or other activities that would improve site distance would have a positive affect on public safety.

The manner in which a community manages its transportation system and the pattern of new development and changes in land use are directly related. There are a number of roads that have been abandoned by the Town, but there is no official Town Road Inventory to document the status of these roads in. Even if there were, there is no regulatory guidance at this time that would allow the Town to limit development on certain roads, such as substandard private roads, roads that the Town does not maintain year-round, or roads that have been abandoned or discontinued by the Town. As more new residences are built on poor or deteriorating roads, and seasonal residences on camp roads are converted to year-round use, the demand for better roads follows. Requests to pave roads that are currently gravel, upgrade private roads to Town standards, and maintain (plow) roads that were formerly closed in winter months all increase the public’s cost and could encourage more development in areas of town where limiting development is desired.

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan stated, “...road and traffic conditions are strongly affected by new development within town. Our plans should encourage development which takes advantage of good roads and good traffic flow, and discourage development which would impact poor roads or existing high accident areas.” Since 1991, approximately half of the building permits issued were for development on camp roads and roads in “poor” or “deteriorating” condition. In an effort to reverse this trend, the following transportation policies and strategies have been developed.

**Goal: To ensure safe and effective means of egress within the Town of Acton in a manner consistent with desired development patterns.**

Policy: It is the policy of the Town of Acton to limit development on substandard private roads, roads that the Town does not maintain year-round, and roads that have been abandoned or discontinued by the Town.

## Strategies

1. Conduct a thorough review of Town records to determine the legal status of those roadways depicted as “abandoned” on the “Transportation Infrastructure” map.

**Responsibility: Road Committee/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2005**

2. Develop an official Acton Road Inventory, incorporating the information discovered in the review of legal status.

**Responsibility: Road Committee/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2006**

3. Require roads be upgraded to at least Class C Town standards, subject to Planning Board discretion, before issuing building permits for projects building three (3) or more residential units.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

4. Require roads be upgraded to Class A Town standards, subject to Planning Board discretion, before issuing building permits for projects building any commercial or industrial facilities.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

Policy: It is the policy of the Town of Acton to schedule and design transportation improvements that provide a high level of access to land in the Village and Transition areas while preserving mobility on Route 109, Foxes Ridge Road, Milton Mills Road, and roads identified Local Roads Functioning as Collectors on the “Functional Classification” map.

## Strategies

1. Prepare a road network Master Plan for potential service roads within the Village and Transition areas for adoption as part of this Comprehensive Plan. Consider a modified grid pattern of streets to provide a village-like quality and safe options for pedestrian and bicycle travel.
2. Continue study of roadway widths in town, particularly as they pertain to possible development in the rural areas of the community.

**Responsibility: CPIC/Selectmen**

**Time Frame: 2008**

3. Develop Class AA design standards for roads identified as Local Road Functioning as Collector on the “Functional Classification” map.

and/or

4. Request that the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) review the Federal Functional Classification of roads identified as Local Road Functioning as Collector on the "Functional Classification" map.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Road Committee**

**Time Frame: 2007**

Policy: It is the policy of the Town of Acton to enhance and maintain safety on its public transportation network.

Strategies

1. Coordinate with MaineDOT on design and funding of transportation improvements for locations identified in the Transportation Inventory as safety concerns.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

2. Participate in MaineDOT's Rural Road Initiative program, in which municipalities provide a 33% match for capital improvements on Minor Collectors (Foxes Ridge Road and Milton Mills Road).

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

3. Schedule funding for bridge improvements on a regular basis for the three (3) town-maintained bridges to achieve and maintain a Federal Sufficiency Rating of 60 or greater. Coordinate with Milton, New Hampshire as appropriate for those two bridges located on the border.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Road Committee**

**Time Frame: 2006-2010**

Policy: It is the policy of the Town of Acton to encourage more residents to work closer to home or consider carpooling to jobs that are further away.

Strategies

1. Encourage the use of park-and-ride lots in Acton.

**Responsibility: Selectmen/Road Committee**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

2. Support in-town livelihood development in Acton by reviewing, and perhaps relaxing, standards for home occupations in Town.

**Responsibility: CPIC**

**Time Frame: 2006**

## **Regional Coordination**

### Regional Coordination Goals, Policies and Strategies

Acton has become an active participant in the so called “Ten-Town Group” of northern York County. The group continues to explore opportunities for collaboration and cost savings which might exist amongst the communities. A presentation by SMRPC showed that most towns had already invested in prior years in major capital items such as buildings, and equipment and the opportunities for shared purchases in that regard were somewhat few. However, it was also clear that as these towns continue to grow those opportunities will emerge again particularly in the areas of recreation, libraries and rural fire/rescue service needs.

Acton has also been highly supportive of the newly formed Three Rivers Land Trust which covers five town area including Acton. The trust has a distinct regional flavor and has already preserved a large property which crosses the Acton/Lebanon line. The work of the Trust and the presentations of Beginning with Habitat data have begun to allow town officials to look beyond town lines regarding land use issues.

The issue of the school is one that will need to be addressed. There is hesitancy on the part of the town to establish additional agreements with other communities for the placement of Acton students in grades K-8. This issue may need to be evaluated as part of the discussions on the expanded school situation.

**Goal: To examine and work with adjoining communities and the region as a whole in developing economies of scale for capital investments, new efficiencies in service provision and regional land use initiatives.**

Policy 1: Work with adjoining communities on capital investment strategies and service provision.

Strategies:

1. Continue working with the Ten-town group on issues related to inter-local agreements and sharing of resources and services.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

2. Consider working with adjoining communities on a regional farmers market to market local produce and products.

**Responsibility: Conservation Commission**

**Time Frame: 2006**

Seek to establish agreement for use of Springvale Library for Acton residents.  
Responsibility: Selectmen  
Time Frame: 2005

Policy 2: Consider land use issues of a regional nature when examining zoning changes and conservation projects.

1. Continue town involvement with both the Three Rivers and Mousam Way Land Trusts as they seek to preserve conservation lands on a regional and local level.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

2. Continue to support the work of the local Lake Associations as they continue to monitor water quality and conduct voluntary watershed protection efforts.

**Responsibility: Selectmen**

**Time Frame: Ongoing**

3. Establish Planning Board procedures to notify abutting towns (Shapleigh, Lebanon) when projects are near the town border or impact significant areas designated by the Beginning with Habitat project.

**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2006**

4. Consider the possibilities of a regional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program with Sanford and surrounding communities.

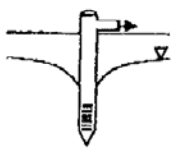
**Responsibility: Planning Board**

**Time Frame: 2007**



JBR Consulting Hydrogeologist 1 207 655 4277 P. 01

re: review for comp plan comm.



**JBR**  
Consulting Hydrogeologist

Appendix A

Tom Cashin  
Acton Comprehensive Plan Update Committee  
425 Goding Road  
Acton, ME 04001

April 9, 2003

Via FAX to Town Office

Dear Tom,

I have completed a review of the July 2002 Acton Zoning Ordinance and June 1991 Acton Subdivision Standards in order to complete the following tasks:

1. Determine the need for:
  - A. increased groundwater protections
  - B. phosphorus controls in lake watersheds for large projects, and
  - C. appropriate controls for single family home construction in the shoreland zone.
2. Provide guidance for incorporating aquifer and groundwater resource maps into the site plan review process, based on discussion with Maine Geological Survey and Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission.
3. Evaluate the need for a Site Plan Review Ordinance versus the current practice of using SMRPC on an as needed/case by case basis.

In general, both documents provide a reasonable level of groundwater and surface water protection, though erosion and stormwater controls are outdated. More current information is available from DEP, other agencies and from other town ordinances. Referencing this information would provide an enhanced level of protection that is appropriate given Acton's growth and development pressures.

Provided below are suggestions for consideration by the Committee with regard to the above tasks and ordinances. While there is a specific DEP methodology that addresses phosphorus control in lake watersheds, I have included comments relating to any kind of surface water protections into Task 1B. Also, I have added a "General Surface Water and Groundwater Protection" category to accommodate my comments. Specific proposed wording changes are provided in *italics*, and each comment has a page number for reference.

**Acton Zoning Ordinance**

**Task 1A -- Increased Groundwater Protections**

- **P.51, 5.6.2 (c)(4) Groundwater and/or Spring Water Extraction and/or Storage** – Clarifying this language to ensure that all of the listed criteria need to be met in order to not have to complete a hydrogeologic investigation would be more protective than the current wording, which could allow for alternative interpretations.
- **P.53, 5.6.2 (d)(6) Groundwater and/or Spring Water Extraction and/or Storage** – “The operator shall make monthly operating records of the ~~quantity~~ *quantity* of water extracted...”
- **P. 66, 5.17 Water Quality Protection** – The first paragraph in this section needs corrections. See proper wording in 5.17.1.

- **P. 67, 5.17.3 – Managing surface releases of hazardous materials** that are stored in bulk on a site is typically done with a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan (SPCC), prepared by a Professional Engineer. While this section dictates this intent, it may be preferable to have an applicant's engineer provide the SPCC that meets current standards for such a plan. In addition, rather than exempting home heating oil tanks, it would be more protective of groundwater resources (especially over mapped sand and gravel aquifers or in areas of thin soils) to ensure that all newly installed heating oil tanks meet DEP or other agency guidelines (Dave McCaskill at DEP would have information on this). Outdoor tanks that are set on cinder blocks under roof eaves are at high risk for spills from ice damage; tanks located on small portable concrete pads at the gable end of houses (preferably with a protective roof) are at much lower risk of releases.

**Task 1B – Phosphorus Control in Lake Watersheds**

- **P. 18, Open Space Use:** Wording and/or punctuation needs clarification. Should the semi- colons be commas? Are earth moving (and the removal or destruction of vegetative cover.....) intended to be an open space use or not?
- **P. 29, 4.2.5 Dimensional Requirements (Shoreland Zone).** A 40,000 square foot minimum lot size under full build out would result in more impervious area and disturbed soil in the watershed than say a 90,000 minimum lot size. Studies show that ecosystem impacts become more pronounced with increasing impervious surface in a watershed. However, depending on town attitudes, this could be a difficult way to protect water quality. In growth areas, 40,000 square feet might be OK, but a larger lot size in rural areas would reduce the total future impervious surface, reduce phosphorus export to the lakes and protect water quality. Raymond's minimum shoreland zone lot size ranges from 2 to 3 acres with 225 feet of frontage.
- **P. 53, 5.8 Mineral Exploration** – add “and to protect water quality” to the end of the paragraph.
- **P. 64, 5.16 Clearing of Vegetation for Development** – It may be worth cross checking this language with the most current available from DEP for the shoreland zone. The “point system” is used by many towns which provides more specific guidelines on how many trees of what size in a specific area can be cut in the shoreland zone (note: the copy of the ordinance that I have was missing page 65). The existing language appears to provide reasonable protection against excess clearing with the possible exception of 5.16.3 which could allow sizeable clearings. Vegetated shorelines protect water quality.
- **P. 66, 5.17 Water Quality Protection** – This may be the appropriate place to include Phosphorus Control in Lake Watersheds: A Technical Guide to Evaluating New Development (Maine DEP September 1992) into the land use ordinance Performance Standards (by reference). While appropriate for Subdivision Standards (see below), it is also applicable to commercial projects that are reviewed under Acton's Land Use Ordinance. A “short form” version of the methodology is provided in the Guide for smaller projects. The Planning Board might want discretion, depending on the size of the project, to either waive the requirement for phosphorus control, require the short form or require the full methodology to be completed.
- Also see argument below for including a Stormwater Plan somewhere in the Performance Standard. Maine's Stormwater Law and Erosion and Sedimentation Control law dictate requirements for larger projects and should be referenced. Note that there is now in place a new law (the so called Phase II Stormwater Law) which needs to be addressed by certain construction projects in towns.

#### **Task 1C – Single Family Home Construction in Shoreland Zone**

- Erosion and Sedimentation control is included in the Performance Standard for Filling, Grading or Other Earth Moving Activity. There does not appear to be a Performance Standard requiring a Stormwater Plan; it is identified only in the Conditional Use Permit section of the Ordinance. Based on this, it appears that there are several uses in town (including single family dwellings in the shoreland zone) that are permitted (i.e. they would not need a Conditional Use Permit) but there are only limited (if any) requirements for stormwater management during and following construction. Including a Stormwater Plan in the Performance Standards should be considered, leaving discretion with the CEO and/or Planning Board for requiring such a plan: small projects could submit simplified plans, but for larger projects on steep slopes with unstable soils, the authority should exist to require a plan be prepared by a P.E. or other land use professional with proper training.
- Raymond has created a simplified “short form” of the Phosphorus Control methodology which is more appropriate for single family residential construction in the shoreland zone. Windham has adopted watershed wide standards.

#### **General Surface Water and Groundwater Protection**

- P. 2, Article 5 – “Water Quality Protection” should be included as one of “the most important standards”.
- P. 39, 5.2 Agriculture – A more current reference for agricultural Best Management Practices is “Strategy for Managing Nonpoint Source Pollution From Agricultural Sources and Best Management System Guidelines”, NPS Agricultural Task Force, 1991. John Jemison at the University of Maine (Orono) Cooperative Extension may have an even more current reference relative to manure spreading. He has put out some great material for farmers to determine crop specific agronomic spreading rates, saving farmers cost, effort and reducing nutrient export to waterways.
- P.87, Performance Guarantees – Erosion, sedimentation and stormwater controls should be included on the list of Performance Guarantees.
- Bill LaFlemme at the Maine DEP Non-Point Source Center in Augusta has a lot a good reference material.

#### **Acton Subdivision Standards**

##### **Task 1A – Increased Groundwater Protections**

- The existing nitrate study requirement and rules relative to siting septic systems and well constructions appear to provide a reasonable degree of groundwater protection.
- Some form of contingency planning language should be considered for water supply wells (new or existing) that are impacted by any ledge blasting that may be necessary for subdivision development.

##### **Task 1B – Phosphorus Control in Lake Watersheds**

- P. 9, 12, 13, 16, Minor and Major Subdivisions – no provisions are made for requiring submissions for phosphorus control. The appropriate reference is: Phosphorus Control in Lake Watersheds: A Technical Guide to Evaluating New Development (Maine DEP September 1992); For Minor Subdivisions, no provisions are made for submissions for erosion control or stormwater management plans. Appropriate references (also applicable to updating the references for such plans under Major Subdivisions) include: 2) Maine Erosion Control Handbook for Construction: Best Management Practices (Maine DEP/CCSWCD March 1991); Stormwater Management – Water Quality and Quantity Guidelines (Ken Wood/YCSWCD 1992). As noted above, state

permitting requirements for erosion control and stormwater should be referenced.

**Task 1C – Not Applicable**

**Task 2 – Groundwater Resource Mapping**

I have spoken with Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and Maine Geological Survey regarding electronic versions of aquifer maps. MGS confirmed that the Maine Office of GIS now has the most current aquifer maps (1:24,000 scale), and these maps are in fact what SMRPC has available to them for use in their ArcInfo/ArcView GIS system. I spoke with the GIS specialist at SMRPC about the possibility of producing large scale (i.e. one inch = 300 feet) maps combining aquifers, lot lines, topographic and drainage layers for use in site plan reviews by the Planning Board. This type of map appears to be something SMRPC can produce. The next step would be to try producing a test map of a parcel for a project recently reviewed by the Board. Note that some detail on the aquifer maps (i.e. specific wells, test pit, boring locational data) are not yet available on the OGIS layers, but should be in the future. The other maps listed in the Ordinance are not currently available from the OGIS, but MGS can provide locational and well construction data electronically for bedrock wells in their data base. This information could likely be incorporated into a GIS layer at SMRPC for the whole town. Based on discussion with SMRPC, I am assuming that a GIS layer could easily be created of the several bedrock recharge areas identified in the current Acton Comprehensive Plan.

**Task 3 – Site Plan Review**

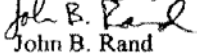
Raymond's Site Plan Review is a separate article contained within the Land Use Ordinance and has far more detail than the Conditional Permit requirements spelled out near the end of the Acton Land Use Ordinance. While Acton's existing ordinance does provide a degree of water (and land) resource protection, a Site Plan Review article in the ordinance would provide more complete protection.

I hope the above is helpful. Give a call at 655-4277 if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

JBR

Consulting Hydrogeologist

  
John B. Rand

Maine Certified Geologist #262