

(Capital Improvement) **Capital Program Proposal – Detail**

**Department Name** PLANNING

**Project** Kelley's Corner Planning & Design  
**Fiscal Year** 2014

**Department Head** Roland Bartl

**Cost** \$277,000.00  
**Priority** 1 of 2

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**1. Description**

This proposal will begin implementation of the Acton 2020 Roadmap towards greater environmental and fiscal sustainability (see [www.Acton2020.info](http://www.Acton2020.info)), which identifies Kelley's Corner as a target improvement area. This project will accomplish the needed steps to transition Kelley's Corner into the Town Center that Actonians want to see:

- (1) Develop and implement the appropriate regulatory and zoning reform for Kelley's corner that has architectural and site design standards at the front and center; and
- (2) Rebuild the tired public infrastructure in Kelley's corner with a focus on pedestrian connections, safety, and comfort.

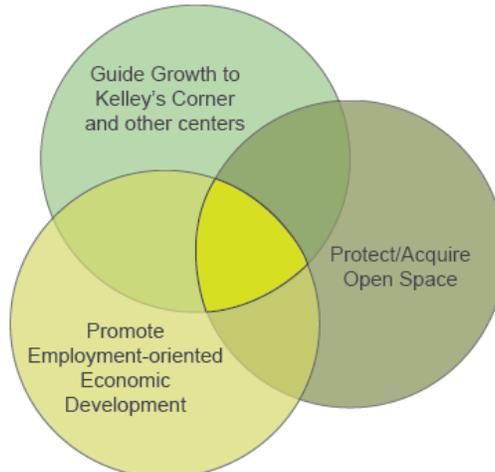
**2. Useful Life** +/-50 years with further improvement, upgrades, and modernization likely during that period.

**3. Purpose (Please 'X' one of the Boxes and Describe, if Applicable)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Schedule Replacement</b>              | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Increase Personnel Efficiency</b>        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>New or Expanded Service</b>           | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Replace Obsolete or Unsafe Equipment</b> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Other (Please Explain)</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>(Explain Disposal of Old Equipment)</b>  |
- Acton 2020 Implementation:  
Regulatory reform.  
Infrastructure reconstruction and modernization - Design.

**4. Justification**

Town Meeting adopted the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan this past April. At the hub of Acton 2020 is the Roadmap for Guiding Growth with the following three basic implementation principles (see <https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-35918/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>):



The Roadmap for Guiding Growth promotes town centers and employment-oriented economic development in appropriate locations. It encourages future residential development to shift from large lot subdivisions in the Town's remaining open spaces to more compact configurations with smaller dwelling units in and near the town centers. Town centers and compact residential neighborhoods require fewer infrastructure per building unit, and less of it to maintain. Greater proximity between residences, shops, and workplaces means more walking and biking, and fewer miles traveled by car. Town centers and compact development patterns make public transit more viable and practical. Smaller dwelling units have been shown to have fewer school-age children. The result is a Town with greater environmental and financial resilience and sustainability.

With the Roadmap, Acton will employ Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a zoning tool to redirect future growth into the Kelley's Corner area and other centers. In Acton 2020, Actonians identify Kelley's Corner as a priority area needing mixed-use redevelopment towards a Town Center<sup>1</sup> with new local employment opportunities, with housing in a walkable center near jobs, shops and services, and with public infrastructure improvements that support the town center re-development strategy. They also want to be sure that new development and re-development follows acceptable design principles and zoning standards. This essentially sets the sequence of steps to implement the Roadmap:

- (1) Prepare and enact/implement development design standards, regulatory/zoning reform, and improvement/upgrades of public ways, sidewalks, etc. beginning with Kelley's Corner.
- (2) Prepare and enact TDR zoning provisions that help preserve open space (development rights sending areas) and redirect new development into Kelley's Corner (receiving area);
- (3) Actively pursue priority CPA land acquisitions and structure them as purchases of development rights; the Town, or an affiliated entity, can hold and sell these development rights as needed to facilitate the town center development at Kelley's Corner.
- (4) Operate the Roadmap program components in a synchronized manner and fine tune and improve them as needed. Then expand program to other centers.

<sup>1</sup> The Acton 2020 Plan makes 155 citations and references of Kelley's Corner, the following among them:

- Develop Kelley's Corner into a busy, walkable, mixed-use Town center and transportation hub in conformance with a specific plan for the area.
- The Kelley's Corner Development Plan will be part of the Key Centers Plan; it will provide the basis to proceed with zoning changes and infrastructure investments needed to begin the improvements at Kelley's Corner and promote development and redevelopment of key parcels as soon as practicable. This action should be undertaken immediately to prepare for the development of Kelley's Corner. The Kelley's Corner Development Plan can be accelerated to expedite implementation.
- Place-specific guidelines: a key strategy is to do design studies for Kelley's Corner and village centers to set priorities and determine what kind of development is compatible; then make strong guidelines part of the zoning review process.
- Limit and guide growth geographically through infill and redevelopment in and around existing centers (West Acton, South Acton and Kelley's Corner).
- Invest in infrastructure improvements to support development of Kelley's Corner into a town center. This could occur over a period of four or five years after the real estate market has improved; investments may or may not be financed through a bond depending on circumstances at the time.
- Concentrate town investments in Kelley's Corner.
- Concentrate transportation investments such as sidewalks and traffic calming in and around Kelley's Corner and the villages.
- Prioritize Kelley's Corner development, which has sewer service.
- Most participants felt that the Town should focus on Kelly's Corner first.
- "Kelley's Corner equals eyesore. Make it a first priority, other [villages] to follow." (Acton voices)
- "What we are really missing is a Town center. It would be so great to turn Kelley's Corner into such a place." (Acton voices)

## 5. How Was this Project's Priority Determined?

First priority based on the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan.

<b>6. Estimated Cost</b>	<b>\$277,000.00</b>
<b>Less Trade-In (If applicable)</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>\$277,000.00</b>

This number is based on professional estimates for the two prongs of this project and assumes State grants for further implementation:

- (1) Prepare and enact/implement development design standards & regulatory/zoning reform.  
 This will engage a team of consulting professionals (urban design, transportation, commercial real estate, legal and economics) to work with the Planning Department and the Acton 2020 Implementation Committee. → \$ 60,000.00  
*To jumpstart this effort the Town has applied for a \$10,000.00 technical assistance grant from DHCD's MDI (Massachusetts Downtown Initiative) Program.*
- (2) Prepare engineering design plan for reconstruction and modernization of Kelley's Corner infrastructure – wider & accessible sidewalks, bike lanes, shuttle pull out(s), new traffic signal at Main St X Mass. Ave., underground utilities, drainage improvements, etc.  
 Mass Ave., including the intersection with Main St., is a State Highway. Accordingly, project design must meet MassDOT standards. The effort will advance the design plan to the MassDOT 25% stage, including the requisite 25% design hearing. → \$192,000.00  
*The Town has applied for a \$3,000,000.00 Mass Works Infrastructure grant to complete the design and pay for construction. This year's application brings up the project on Mass Works' radar screen. No funding is expected. Future applications will be filed. Mass Works heavily favors projects with 25% design completed and ready to go within 12 months of grant award.*
- (3) Contingency (10%) → \$ 25,000.00
- (4) Total → \$277,000.00**

**7. Are Non-Town Revenues Available to Reduce Cost?**

Not, for the project budget as requested. However, see grant applications listed above.

**8. If this Project is Delayed, What will be the Effect on your Department?**

Unable to effectively work towards Acton 2020 Plan implementation.

**9. Please Describe the Effect of this Project on your Operating Budget.**

<u>Personnel Budget</u>		<u>Expense Budget</u>	
Increase	No significant effect	Increase	No significant effect
Decrease		Decrease	

**10. Attachments, if Applicable.**

- Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan – Executive Summary.
- MDI Program – Technical assistance grant application
- Mass Works Infrastructure Program – grant application



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan

February 2012

# Acton 2020

**Prepared for:**  
Town of Acton  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720  
978-929-6631  
[www.acton-ma.gov](http://www.acton-ma.gov)

**Prepared by:**  
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Six Dover Lane  
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Today. Tomorrow. Together.



# Foreword

In the course of working together as residents on the Acton 2020 committee, we've read a number of other comprehensive community plans. Many of these plans seem to start with a simple extrapolation of past trends put forth for the future, but looking back and then forward at the edge of our 20-year planning scope, we don't think this is the right approach for Acton. Instead, we are proposing something bolder, something that responds to the changes happening all around us.

Over the last sixty years, Acton has been defined by its rapid growth from a rural community to a bedroom suburb.<sup>1</sup> Growth was driven by the post-war boom in suburbia, the broad availability of state and federal support to build infrastructure, the availability of relatively cheap land in Acton, and cheap energy everywhere. But now, land has become more scarce and fuel more expensive. Demographics and sensibilities are changing too - as the population gradually shifts towards more seniors and fewer children and awareness and concern increase for environmental sustainability. From a fiscal standpoint, we also know that we can't rely on an ever increasing population to pay for ever more services. And we are more aware that most new residen-

tial development now comes at an increasing cost:<sup>2</sup> more traffic, more risk to water supplies, more infrastructure to pay for and maintain, and more costs for services.

Actonians are pragmatic and smart. We see changes are coming and we want to find a positive future. What we on the committee have learned during this planning process is that there is an emerging sense among residents of what sorts of shifts will be needed to navigate the coming changes in order to foster a resilient and vibrant community. Indeed, the feedback we've received from residents strongly reflects both a desire for an increased "sense of community" and concern regarding the "future resilience" of the Town. These two themes really frame the Comprehensive Community Plan.

As you read through this document, please keep in mind that the elements of the plan we have laid out do not comprise a simple wishlist that residents expect the Town can achieve by waving a magic wand. The Plan presents a vision of how to support each other by creating a different sort of Town prosperity driven by the richness of social connection, a deep appreciation for the historic and natural realms in which we are em-

bedded in Acton, and a commitment to a good shared future. And it will take broad and deep resident participation to move in this direction; the Town government itself can only do so much.

By communicating with many residents, boards, and committees through numerous meetings and a number of public workshops,<sup>3</sup> a Roadmap for Guiding Growth has emerged that we feel strongly can create Town prosperity. We invite you to join with Town officials, volunteers, and

- The Acton 2020 Committee

*Margaret Woolley Busse*

Margaret Woolley Busse, Chair

*Jim Snyder-Grant*

Jim Snyder-Grant, Vice-Chair

*Celia Kent*

Celia Kent

*Paulina Knibbe*

Paulina Knibbe

*Charles Mercier*

Charles Mercier

*Sahana Purohit*

Sahana Purohit



**The Committee extends its thanks to everyone who participated in the planning process.**

residents to make this vision a reality.

- The Planning Department staff put the plan at the top of their very full work priorities. Kristin Alexander, Roland Bartl, and Kim Gorman contributed countless hours to attending meetings, document production and review, and, over and over, educating the rest of us by answering our questions about how the Town works.
- The rest of the Town's staff have decades of experience in Acton and helped us improve the plan each time they engaged with our process.
- Our consultants at the Collaborative and Community Circle worked tirelessly on building the plan and on nurturing the community-wide conversation that formed the basis of the plan.
- The volunteers of every Town board and committee spent some time on parts of the plan, improving it with their deep knowledge of particular areas, out of their commitment

to Acton.

- And most importantly, there was an unprecedented engagement by the citizens of Acton at each stage of the planning process. Your commitment and involvement in the future of this Town is the key ingredient that gives us hope for Acton's future.

*“Thank you!”*



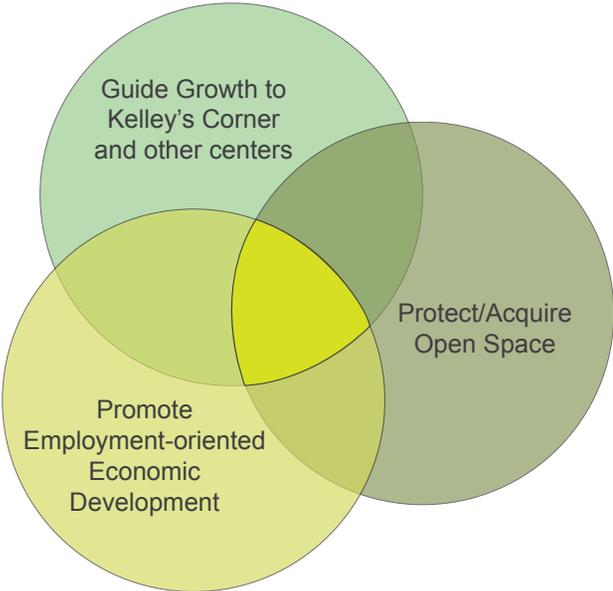
# Introduction

The purpose of the Acton 2020 Plan is ultimately about how to create a better community and covers a whole range of different elements, including land use, recreation, transportation, and housing, to name a few; these are reflected in the Plan’s seven goals and corresponding objectives. The Plan is a decision-making tool to be used by Town officials and citizens to express a desired future and the steps that lead there. It is intended to help guide the future growth and development of Acton and to give the Town a strong sense of direction, positioning Acton well so as to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

The Plan is based on **Underlying Themes** (see sidebar) that were expressed by Actonians. These themes connect residents’ desires and concerns with the Plan’s Goals and Objectives that as mentioned above comprise the entire breadth of the Plan and refer to a range of concepts such as Town character, the environment, and Town facilities.

Many of the themes have to do with growth and its consequences. With the recognition that growth can be guided, but not fully avoided, the main thrust of the Plan describes the **Roadmap**

for addressing our Town’s future growth. The **Roadmap**, while only a sub-set of the overall plan, represents its core and has three main parts. As shown below, these overlap to create a sweet spot that combines both environmental and fiscal sustainability. How those parts work together is explained on the following pages and in the diagram on page 4.



The three parts of the **Roadmap** intersect to provide more environmental and fiscal sustainability.

## Underlying Themes

<p><b>An increased ‘sense of community’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Gathering:</b> desire for indoor and outdoor places and events to meet and interact casually, spontaneously as well as in a planned, more formal fashion.</li> <li>• <b>Town Character:</b> desire to preserve and enhance features - physical and other - including a commitment to excellence in education, rural and historic characteristics, including the preservation of open space and the small town feeling, which make Acton unique and contribute to its sense of community.</li> <li>• <b>Connectivity:</b> desire for walking, biking, public transportation, traffic calming and improvements, and increased opportunities for social networks and connections.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The ‘future resilience’ of the Town</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Sustainability:</b> concern regarding our ability to ensure that future health and well-being of our environment.</li> <li>• <b>Social and Economic Diversity:</b> concern regarding the ability to accommodate a range of socio-economic levels as well as the ability to age in place.</li> <li>• <b>Financial Viability:</b> concern regarding the ability of the Town to protect its assets and maintain a viable balance between taxes and services provided.</li> </ul>

# Roadmap for Guiding Growth

Acton can't avoid all future growth, but it can guide the expected growth in a way that better fits with the Town's goals. The three major parts to this approach, and how they relate, are described and illustrated below:

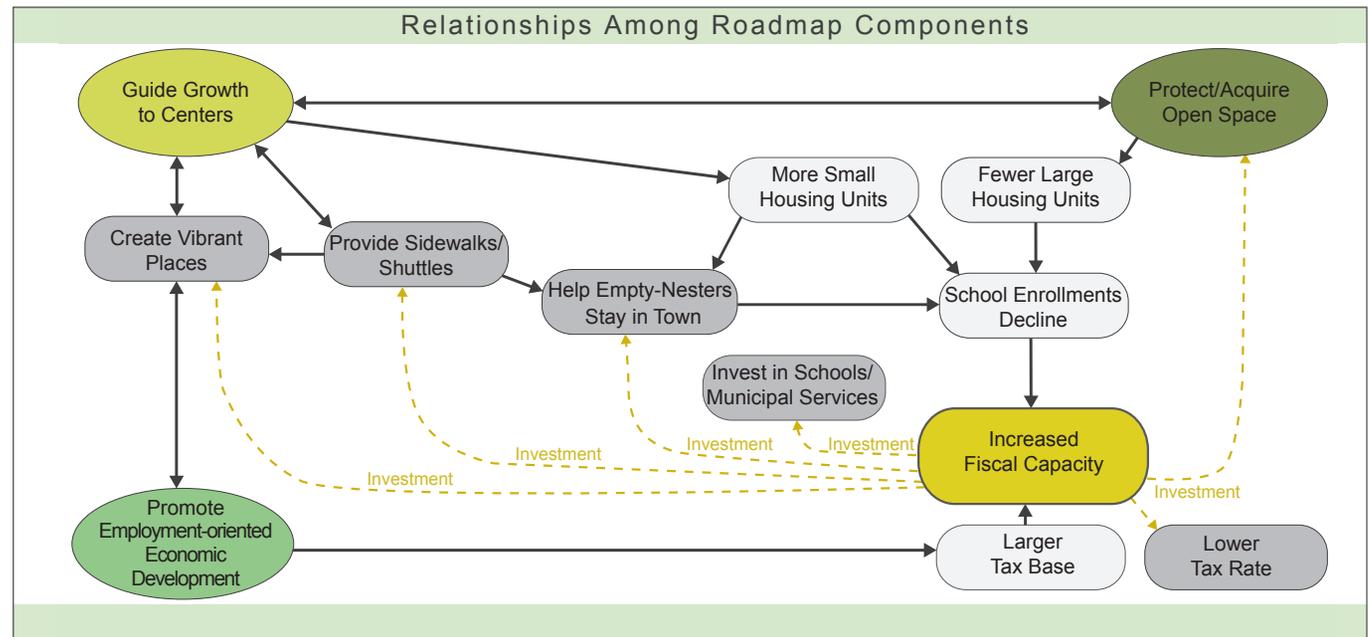
**Guide growth to Kelley's Corner and Key Village Centers** (such as West and South Acton) where smaller residential units will fit the growing market and provide more options for seniors and young people. This type of development strives to be both fiscally and environmentally sustainable.<sup>4</sup> Place-specific guidelines and design review will ensure that new development helps create successful places.<sup>5</sup>

Guiding the majority of growth to village centers in smaller units helps to reduce future school enrollments,<sup>6</sup> provides more affordable housing for empty-nesters who want to continue to live in Acton,<sup>7</sup> and makes it feasible to create livelier walkable places for the whole community to gather.<sup>8</sup>

**Preserve Additional Open Space** by providing incentives to property owners in outlying areas to leave their land undeveloped and instead encouraging them to participate in development in the centers. This will result in preserving the rural characteristics so appreciated by Acton residents. The tool recommended to accomplish this is called Transfer of Development Rights (TDR - see explanation in endnote 9)<sup>9</sup>; it is used to guide growth away from the subdivision of large tracts of land and to the centers without having

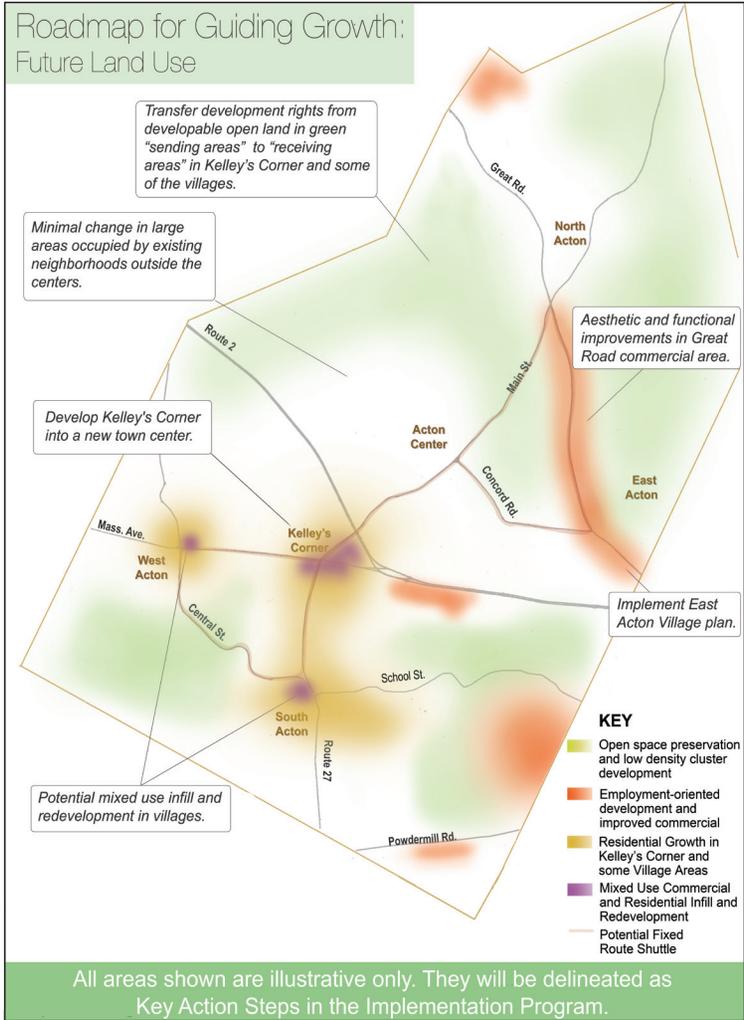
to pay for open space acquisition. It is also recommended that priority parcels be acquired by the Town when possible.

**Actively Promote Employment-Oriented Economic Development**, which will increase the tax base and, along with the mixed-use development in the centers, will produce more tax revenue than the cost of services for the new development<sup>10</sup> and also create local jobs and reduce commuting for more residents.



Relationships among **Roadmap** components (colored ovals), other strategies (darker gray bubbles), and fiscal capacity (gold bubble). This diagram is explained on page 15 of the full report.

The following concept map illustrates the Roadmap for Guiding Growth and identifies some key features:



This map is explained on page 15 of the full report.

### How the Roadmap Addresses Key Concerns

**Financial Resilience.** Acton is currently financially sound with a top bond rating and funds in reserve, but the Town budget is under pressure and costs are expected to rise as healthcare costs and other post-employment benefits increase.<sup>11</sup> In order to address this, some combination of higher taxes, reduced costs or services, and a bigger property tax base will be needed.<sup>12</sup>

The **Roadmap promotes economic development in appropriate locations**, and encourages **fiscally beneficial residential development** by shifting from large lot subdivisions, which increase school enrollments and costs, to compact development with smaller units that have been shown to have fewer school-age children and therefore generate more tax revenue than costs.<sup>13</sup>

**Environmental Resilience.**<sup>14</sup> Acton is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and protecting its water resources. These efforts have some costs, but the investments will be repaid in lower energy costs and avoiding the need to later remediate impacts to the Town's drinking water.<sup>15</sup>

#### The Roadmap and More

- The Plan is comprehensive and contains much more than the Roadmap for Guiding Growth; it contains strategies to implement the complete set of Goals and Objectives (page 7).
- The Key Implementation Strategies (pages 8 & 9) are a summary of the highest priorities of a much more extensive list of strategies and action steps recommended to achieve the goals and objectives, and are listed in the full report and at <http://implementation.acton2020.info/>.
- This document also includes some interesting facts about Acton on the page entitled "Did You Know?"(page 13). Finally, while this summary contains a page of Notes and References keyed to the text that provides some basic explanations and support for the report's statements, it is the full Acton 2020 plan that provides a thorough explanation and examination of each of the plan's components.

## Where the Roadmap Takes Us

- Kelley’s Corner becomes a busy, walkable Town center.
- Villages become denser with redevelopment of non-residential parcels; stronger design review preserves and enhances existing character.
- School enrollments decline gradually; school costs rise more slowly as the population ages and the housing mix in the new development provides smaller units for seniors and others.<sup>16</sup>
- The tax base is expanded by economic development.
- Home values (adjusted for inflation) outside the centers will be maintained and those in the villages may increase.<sup>17</sup>
- Many large parcels of open land will be protected through acquisition and transfer of development rights to the centers; on those that do develop, part of the parcel can be protected through cluster zoning.<sup>18</sup>

By concentrating growth, it becomes feasible to serve more of Acton’s population by public transportation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saving money for residents, and providing access for Actonians who can’t drive or don’t wish to be automobile-dependent. It also gives residents the opportunity for walking, which

benefits fitness goals and increases sense of connection to others.

## Future Contingencies

A Comprehensive Plan should be resilient – it should continue to be a guide even if the unpredictable happens. The “**wild cards**” that Acton might have to face include:

- Prolonged economic downturn combined with escalating healthcare and pension costs.
- Energy costs rise even more sharply than in recent years.
- Weather events, such as more frequent and more violent storms and significant climate changes.
- School enrollments that don’t decline as expected.
- Revival of the housing market leading to a major residential subdivision proposed for a large tract of land.

There is also the risk that things don’t turn out as anticipated, e.g., more or less development pressure, tighter budgets, or unforeseen infrastructure needs.

By guiding growth to the centers and protecting open space through transfer of development rights, the development of a large tract of land

with consequent increases in school and other costs, can potentially be channeled into compact mixed-use development with smaller units that generate less school cost and pay more taxes than their cost to service.

By emphasizing employment-oriented economic development, the most promising source of added tax revenue, Acton can do better than similar towns that don’t invest in attracting commercial growth, even in a prolonged downturn.

By moving to more sustainable land use patterns, alternatives to the automobile become more feasible, reinforcing these patterns and enabling people to reduce their energy costs.

By calling for appropriate guidelines and more rigorous review of development in the centers, particularly Kelley’s Corner where sewers are already in place, the Town’s water supply can be better protected from wastewater impacts, largely funded by new development. A key recommendation is a study of each center to assess capacity and potential impacts.

And if Town finances constrain desired improvements, the phasing of major investments can be adjusted to correspond to available resources (see page 10).

# Goals and Objectives

<p><b>GOAL 1: Preserve and Enhance Town Character</b></p> <p><b>Objective 1.1:</b> Strengthen planning tools to manage growth pro-actively.</p> <p><b>Objective 1.2:</b> Preserve and enhance key centers.</p> <p><b>Objective 1.3:</b> Preserve rural characteristics and open space.</p> <p><b>Objective 1.4:</b> Preserve historic buildings and landscapes.</p> <p><b>Objective 1.5:</b> Foster an understanding and appreciation for what makes Acton unique, including its history.</p> <p><b>GOAL 2: Ensure Environmental Sustainability</b></p> <p><b>Objective 2.1:</b> Protect the quality and quantity of Acton’s water.</p> <p><b>Objective 2.2:</b> Reduce waste and the accumulation of toxins.</p> <p><b>Objective 2.3:</b> Reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.</p> <p><b>Objective 2.4:</b> Move toward patterns of land use and land protection that support broad biodiversity, soil preservation, and healthy local agriculture.</p> <p><b>GOAL 3: Improve Connections</b></p> <p><b>Objective 3.1:</b> Make walking and biking easier and safer.</p> <p><b>Objective 3.2:</b> Improve transportation around Town.</p> <p><b>Objective 3.3:</b> Promote communication among Town government, citizens, schools, and the business community.</p> <p><b>Objective 3.4:</b> Support and strengthen neighborhoods.</p> <p><b>GOAL 4: Provide More Opportunities for Community Gathering and Recreation</b></p> <p><b>Objective 4.1:</b> Create new gathering spaces and make better use of existing ones.</p>	<p><b>Objective 4.2:</b> Provide more playgrounds, fields for team sports, parks, and conservation lands.</p> <p><b>Objective 4.3:</b> Support additional cultural activities.</p> <p><b>GOAL 5: Support Inclusion and Diversity</b></p> <p><b>Objective 5.1:</b> Support residents of all ages.</p> <p><b>Objective 5.2:</b> Support households of all income levels.</p> <p><b>Objective 5.3:</b> Embrace cultural diversity.</p> <p><b>Objective 5.4:</b> Support citizens with disabilities in participating fully in the life of the community.</p> <p><b>GOAL 6: Preserve and Enhance Town-Owned Assets and Services</b></p> <p><b>Objective 6.1:</b> Protect Town-owned open space.</p> <p><b>Objective 6.2:</b> Support excellence in schools.</p> <p><b>Objective 6.3:</b> Manage the Town’s facilities efficiently.</p> <p><b>Objective 6.4:</b> Provide high quality services that are responsive to community needs.</p> <p><b>Objective 6.5:</b> Provide excellent public health and safety services.</p> <p><b>GOAL 7: Maintain and Improve the Financial Well-Being of the Town</b></p> <p><b>Objective 7.1:</b> Promote fiscal responsibility.</p> <p><b>Objective 7.2:</b> Promote economic development that supports other Acton 2020 planning goals.</p> <p><b>Objective 7.3:</b> Improve existing commercial areas.</p> <p><b>Objective 7.4:</b> Support the financial ability of all residents to stay in Acton for a lifetime.</p>
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# Key Implementation Strategies

The Goals and Objectives and Roadmap for Guiding Growth will be implemented through a number of strategies that involve one or more action steps. The full Implementation Program is in the body of the report and online at <http://implementation.acton2020.info/>. Fifteen key recommendations stand out as highest priority among the more than 200 proposed action steps and are listed below, not in priority order.

## Roadmap Strategies for Guided Growth

### ► Guide Growth to Kelley’s Corner and Villages

- **Develop Kelley’s Corner into a mixed-use Town center and transportation hub** in conformance with a specific plan for the area. Encourage mixed use with people living in smaller housing units near vibrant shops and restaurants with opportunities for socializing, running errands, dining, and community gathering. Creating more activities and a safe and pleasant pedestrian environment will also attract teens from the nearby school complex; they should be involved in the planning for the area.
- Prepare a plan to improve Kelley’s Corner and to **preserve and enhance village centers**. The **Key Centers Plan** will set priorities for new development and redevelopment in centers. The plan should consider Kelley’s Corner and the villages as a system, build on existing strengths in each, identify necessary aesthetic and functional improvements, assess capacity for density incentives, and prioritize and sequence which areas to work on first. This plan would include a quantitative analysis of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) system, to verify which incentives are most likely to create the desired changes.



The **Kelley’s Corner Development Plan** will be part of the Key Centers Plan; it will provide the basis to proceed with zoning changes and infrastructure investments needed to begin the improvements at Kelley’s Corner and promote development and redevelopment of key parcels as soon as practicable.

- **Actively promote employment-oriented economic development** (e.g., Research and Development, high tech, office) to expand the tax base. This may also reduce commute time for some residents.
- **Protect, acquire, and improve open space** for conservation, farming, and recreation, using a combination of acquisition and zoning, including Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to move development away from open land and to the key centers. This will help protect Town character and the environment, as well as provide additional opportunities for recreation.

## Other Strategies

- **Consider a sewer extension and/or advanced package wastewater treatment** with groundwater recharge in order to support an increase in

small-scale commercial development and better manage wastewater in West Acton.

- ▶ **Improve the transfer station to increase recycling and reuse.**
- ▶ **Construct more sidewalks and facilities for safe bicycling, in centers and Town-wide.** This will help connect people and places and provide opportunities for fitness while also being beneficial for the environment (by reducing car fumes).
- ▶ **Reduce energy use in Town buildings and promote Town-wide energy conservation.** Support joint community/Town efforts to reduce reliance on fossil-fuel energy sources and to explore shifting to renewable sources.
- ▶ **Develop policies and strategies to keep empty-nesters in Acton.** As the senior population continues to grow, they will need a number of facilities and services that meet their special needs.
- ▶ **Continue to fund, and later expand, MinuteVan** to build ridership with more frequent service between village centers, Kelley’s Corner, and the rail station. This will connect various places in Town and also provide a service to those who cannot drive as well as to those wishing to use public transportation.
- ▶ **Construct a new building to accommodate the Senior Center and larger community,** when finances permit. This will serve to provide space for expanded programming for an increasing senior population as

well as a meeting and gathering place for the community at large.

- ▶ Prepare a proactive plan that encourages the **provision of a wide range of housing types** to meet the needs of empty nesters, Town employees, young couples, and those of moderate income, by locating housing **in small, scattered sites near walkable service and business destinations**, especially village centers. Consider possible Town participation in desired housing developments. The plan should address the Town’s relationship to the state’s affordable housing law (Chapter 40B), but its purpose is to address Acton’s local and regional housing needs.
- ▶ Create a new **committee composed of liaisons from the various ethnic and language groups in Town** to provide **information to newcomers and assist with organizing multi-cultural activities.** This will help build bridges, knitting the community closer together, and it will provide guidance to those unfamiliar with the Town and its resources.
- ▶ **Continue to support and achieve high standards of excellence in Acton’s schools.** A majority of residents when asked “Why did you move to Acton?” responded: “because of the schools.” The schools and school-related activities are a major community focus contributing to the culture of Acton.
- ▶ **Continue to work to control cost,** planning for future financial responsibilities like pension liabilities and finding new ways to reduce current costs, such as regionalization and cooperation with other towns.



# Cost and Phasing of Major Actions

Town finances are being squeezed between the desire for services (excellent schools and other Town priorities) and a limited tax base, reduced state aid, and unfunded liabilities. Fortunately many of the Plan’s top recommendations can begin to be implemented with existing Town staff and relatively small additional expenditures (e.g., small-scale studies to prepare for appropriate growth in the centers).<sup>19</sup> Other priorities like a new building to serve seniors and the larger community, or an expanded shuttle system, are more expensive.

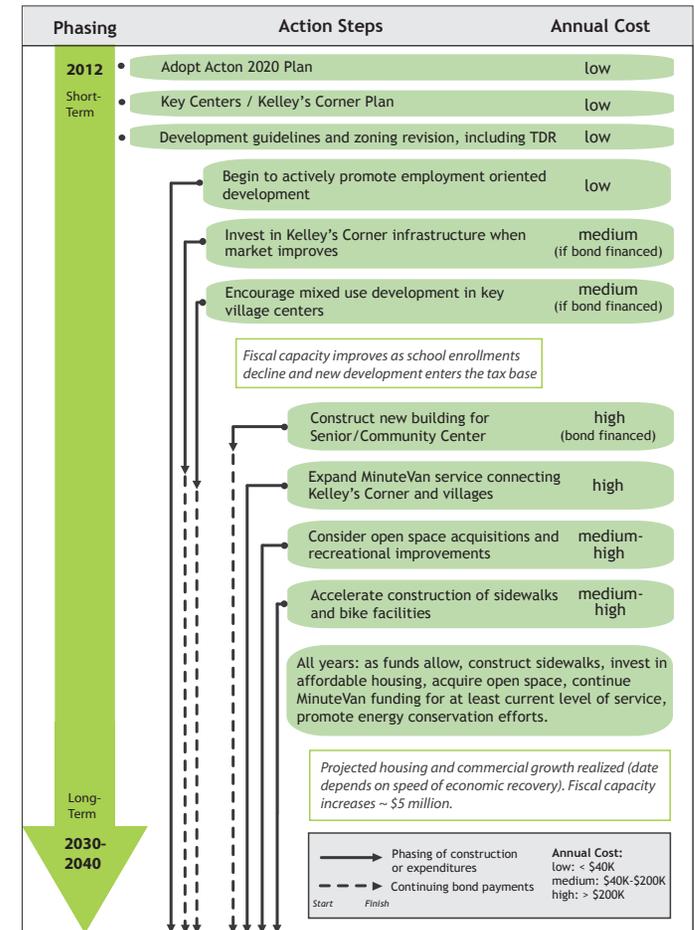
The solution to this challenge is to **phase the major actions as finances permit**. This can include some open space acquisition<sup>20</sup> and investment in pedestrian and bicycle facilities each year as can be afforded, continuing to fund the MinuteVan at current levels<sup>21</sup> until expansion becomes feasible, phasing improvements to support desired redevelopment in Kelley’s Corner as the market revives, and planning for a new senior/community center,<sup>22</sup> but putting off construction until it can be afforded.

In the meantime, Town fiscal capacity can be improved by promoting economic development, seeking special purpose state funding and grants,

continuing to explore public-private partnerships for specific projects, and cooperating with surrounding towns to provide services more efficiently. Also, the current economic slowdown is an opportunity to complete the initial planning steps so that the Town is poised for action when opportunities arise and/or the economic climate changes. The recommendation to reduce energy use in Town buildings and promote Town-wide energy conservation will pay for itself and also help to save money for residents and businesses.

It is significant that a fiscal analysis of the **Roadmap** concluded that by the time 1,200 new housing units and 1.5 million square feet of commercial space have been built (longer than 20 years because of the current economic downturn), Acton’s fiscal capacity will be increased by nearly 5 million dollars per year compared to a business-as-usual scenario where no roadmap for growth is implemented.<sup>23</sup> More detail on costs is presented in the body of the report.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the major investments, the Plan also identifies actions

## Phasing Key Investments:



that don’t cost much to implement but have significant benefits; these “ripe apples” are identified throughout the implementation program (see Full Plan Report).<sup>25</sup>



# Process

The Plan was developed in two phases.<sup>26</sup> The first, **Phase I**, comprised extensive and intensive outreach to the Acton community through a variety of means including:

- Town-wide visioning sessions
- focus groups with Town boards and committees and other specific stakeholder groups
- Town-wide mail and telephone surveys covering all households and businesses and
- multiple opportunities and input for and from the Town's youth

This extensive public input resulted in an “Emerging Vision Statement” and a set of Goals and Objectives that encapsulated what residents and business owners envisioned for the Town's future.



**Phase II** involved the following major activities:

- Development of an inventory of existing conditions of the Town's resources (including housing, transportation, public services and facilities, open space and recreation, cultural and natural resources, economic development, and land use.)
- Refinement of the Goals and Objectives.
- Identification of Key Issues, Opportunities, and Challenges and development of a preliminary list of ways to address them.
- Development of a comprehensive Implementation Plan that provides a prioritized and phased proposal for moving forward to fulfill the vision and goals.
- Facilitation of an extensive level of public involvement, including:
  - Use of the internet both to disseminate information regarding the process and the content of the Plan as well as to provide an additional opportunity for people to interact with the content of the Plan (blog, Facebook, and interactive posting of the entire Implementation Plan).
  - Seven major public forums and more than 10 public meetings with special outreach to specific Town boards and committees.

## Components of the “Emerging Vision” (from Phase I)

- *Preserving the rural and historic characteristics*
  - *A sustainable future*
  - *Excellent schools*
  - *Recreational opportunities*
  - *Lively, safe neighborhoods*
  - *Attractive, safe, and walkable shopping areas*
  - *Sidewalks and bike paths*
  - *A Town shuttle*
  - *Open communication and accessible information*
  - *Opportunities for the community to gather*
  - *Vibrant village centers*
  - *Kelley's Corner as walkable Town center*
  - *Welcoming residents*
- 
- Production of a movie “It's a Wonderful Acton” to raise awareness and increase turnout to a key forum.
  - Involvement of youth through art contest.

# Notes and References

The notes below provide sources and explanations for the statements in the report that are flagged with the corresponding numbers.

1. Rapid growth (p.1): See growth chart in full report, page 21. Acton's population has grown at a rate of over 3,000 persons per decade since 1950.
2. Increasing cost of new residential development (p.1): See Fiscal impact research in Appendix 6, Volume III, Harrison and French, Introduction to Fiscal Impact Analysis, UNH; and Kotval and Mullin, Fiscal Impact Analysis.
3. Number of public forums (p.1): See Process section in full report, p.165.
4. Fiscally and environmentally sustainable (p.4): fiscally sustainable because of smaller units and more compact development making it easier to serve Town streets and infrastructure. Residential development can be fiscally positive (p.1): the main reason residential development in the past has cost more than the taxes it generates is the added burden to the schools, which comprise over 2/3 of Acton's budget. Even though there are individual instances of many children in a small housing unit, on average, the number of school children is strongly correlated with the number of bedrooms in the new housing. This has been substantiated in the number of new school enrollments generated by the Avalon Acton housing development. Smaller units have fewer school children and generate more taxes than costs to the Town.
5. Place-specific guidelines (p.4): a key strategy is to do design studies for Kelley's Corner and village centers to set priorities and determine what kind of development is compatible, then make these guidelines part of the zoning review process.
6. Smaller units reduce school enrollments (p.4): see note 4.
7. More affordable housing for empty-nesters (p.4): in the sense that smaller units that empty-nesters may desire will cost less than single family homes; "affordable" does not necessarily refer to state housing definitions and goals, but could include some of this type of units.
8. Livelier walkable places (p.4): compact mixed-use development with pedestrian amenities has been shown to create lively places where people want to be.
9. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) (p.4): TDR is a zoning mechanism that has been used across the United States; a property owner in a designated "sending area" can work with an owner in a "receiving area", e.g. Kelley's Corner, to sell the rights to development of the sender's property to the owner in a receiving area; there is no cost to the Town except development review, and the sending property is protected from any future development.
10. Economic development produces more taxes than costs (p.4): This is mostly due to the fact that commercial development does not add to school costs. (See references cited in note 2).
11. Healthcare and pension expenses increase (p.5): Acton, like most Massachusetts towns, needs to prepare to pay for obligations to teachers and employees who will retire over the next 20 years.
12. Bigger property tax base needed (p.5): it is preferable to raise property tax revenues to pay for increasing costs from new development of the type that is fiscally positive, instead of higher taxes on existing residential and commercial property; see notes 4 and 10.
13. Fiscally beneficial residential development (p.5): development with smaller units that consequently generate fewer school enrollments overall; see note 4.
14. Environmental resilience (p.5): Shifting residential growth from large lot subdivisions to compact development in the centers saves energy by reducing auto dependency, and it enables wastewater to be handled better via sewers or advanced package treatment plants, while leaving more open space undeveloped. Dealing with existing and anticipated stormwater issues in the centers can be planned for now, instead of waiting for worsening conditions.
15. Town's drinking water (p.5): Acton's public water supply comes from groundwater wells; therefore it is essential to protect the groundwater from sanitary wastewater and other contaminants and to recharge stormwater to the ground.
16. Smaller units for seniors and others (p.6): the compact development that would be encouraged for Kelley's Corner and, potentially, other village centers, would be mixed-use with apartments and condo units in low-rise buildings, suitable for seniors, empty nesters, and small families.
17. Home values (p.6): Acton homes would keep their value as the Town's character and excellent schools are preserved; village-specific plans and development guidelines would make them desirable places and potentially increase the value of existing homes.
18. Cluster zoning (p.6): in areas away from villages, Acton's current zoning permits new housing units to be concentrated on approximately half of a residential parcel, leaving the other half in deeded open space.
19. Small-scale studies (p.10): These relatively inexpensive studies (less than \$40,000) are the key to determining development priorities and developing guidelines to create successful places, preserve existing character, and minimize impacts.
20. Open space acquisition (p.10): the Town would continue to use Community Preservation Act funds to acquire open space when it becomes available; when finances permit, additional land acquisition can protect more open land and pre-empt large-lot subdivision that is likely to increase school costs more than it contributes in property taxes; see note 4.
21. MinuteVan (p.10): continuing this service is important to moving toward a more sustainable transportation system that provides an alternative to car travel and serves the Town's key centers.
22. Senior center (p.10): the current center is not large enough to fully serve today's seniors; as the population ages, a larger center will be even more needed. The limited hours scheduled for use by seniors would permit the larger community to be served by the same facility.
23. These cost scenarios were developed to help make informed planning choices, but more detailed analysis of individual costs will be needed in the Implementation Phase.
24. Fiscal analysis of Roadmap for Guiding Growth (p.10): see page 19 of the full report.
25. "Ripe apples" (p.10): also called "low hanging fruit," i.e., relatively low cost for the benefits provided.
26. Two phases of the 2020 Plan (p.11): see "Process" section of full report, beginning Page 175. Both phases involved extensive outreach.



## Did You Know?

Extensive research was done by the consultant team, the 2020 Committee, and additional information was contributed by some members of the public.

The “snapshot” on this page is largely drawn from the Inventory Report, which is summarized in the last section of this volume and presented in full in Volume II.

### Housing and Population

- Acton’s 2010 U.S. Census population was 21,924, up 8% since 2000.
- The percent of residents 65 and older is expected to nearly double over the next 20 years from less than 10% to over 18%.
- Over the same period the number of school-age children is expected to decline slightly, even while the total population increases.
- Acton had 8,530 housing units in 2010, up 11% from 2,000. 63% are single family houses.
- Projections by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council suggested that, based on current policies, population will increase by 10% by 2030 and housing units will increase by 1,000 units or 12%.

### Schools and School Enrollments

- In 2010 there were 218 students (K-12) per 1,000 population, the third highest of the towns Acton touches.<sup>1</sup>
- Acton Public Schools spent \$11,246 per pupil in 2009-2010, the second lowest of the towns it touches.
- Acton-Boxborough Regional High School was named a Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education in 2009.

### Land Use

- Acton’s land area is approximately 13,000 acres (20 square miles).
- 29% of Acton’s land area is open space (lower than five of the towns it touches). Roughly 1/3 of this open space is not protected from development.
- There are about 2,200 acres of developable land (vacant and not wetland).
- Based on 2008 land use data, approximately 1,800 additional housing units could be built on land now zoned residential, bringing the total at build-out to 10,300, or 22% more than today. This would take more than 30 years at the projected growth rates.

<sup>1</sup> These are Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Sudbury, and Westford.

### Water and Wastewater

- All of Acton’s public water supply comes from groundwater wells.
- Water demand has been relatively constant over the past six years, approximately 600 million gallons per year (MGY), reflecting water conservation efforts. Acton’s state permit allows up to 708.1 MGY.
- Residential water demand is estimated by Acton Water District to be roughly 55 gallons per bedroom per day, substantially lower than the norm of 70.
- 80% of Acton’s homes have on-site septic systems, a high ratio for a town of Acton’s population. The other 20 percent use sewers or package treatment to dispose of wastewater.

### And...

- The average household in Acton drives 76 miles per day, the lowest of the adjacent towns except Concord.
- 87.5% of Town revenues come from residential property, in the middle of the group of towns it touches.
- Acton was named the 16th Best Place To Live among small towns in the country by Money Magazine in 2009 and in 2011.



2013 Downtown Technical Assistance Application Cover Sheet

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program

Community Name:	Town of Acton
Date of Application:	09/27/12
Title of Project:	Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan: Implementation for Kelley's Corner, Phase 1. Best Practices and Next Steps towards reshaping Kelley's Corner.

Principal Contact: Please print clearly.

Name:	Roland Bartl	Address:	Town of Acton
Title:	Planning Director		Planning Department
Phone:	978-929-6631		472 Main Street
Email:	rbartl@acton-ma.gov		Acton, MA 01720

Name & Signature of the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Elected Official (Required):

Name & Title:	Steven Ledoux, Town Manager
Signature:	

(REQUIRED FOR SUBMISSION) Check one box for the type of assistance being requested:

- Business Improvement District
- Creative Economy
- Design
- Economics of Downtown
- Housing
- Parking
- Way finding/Branding

See attached program description for more information relating to the designated topics.

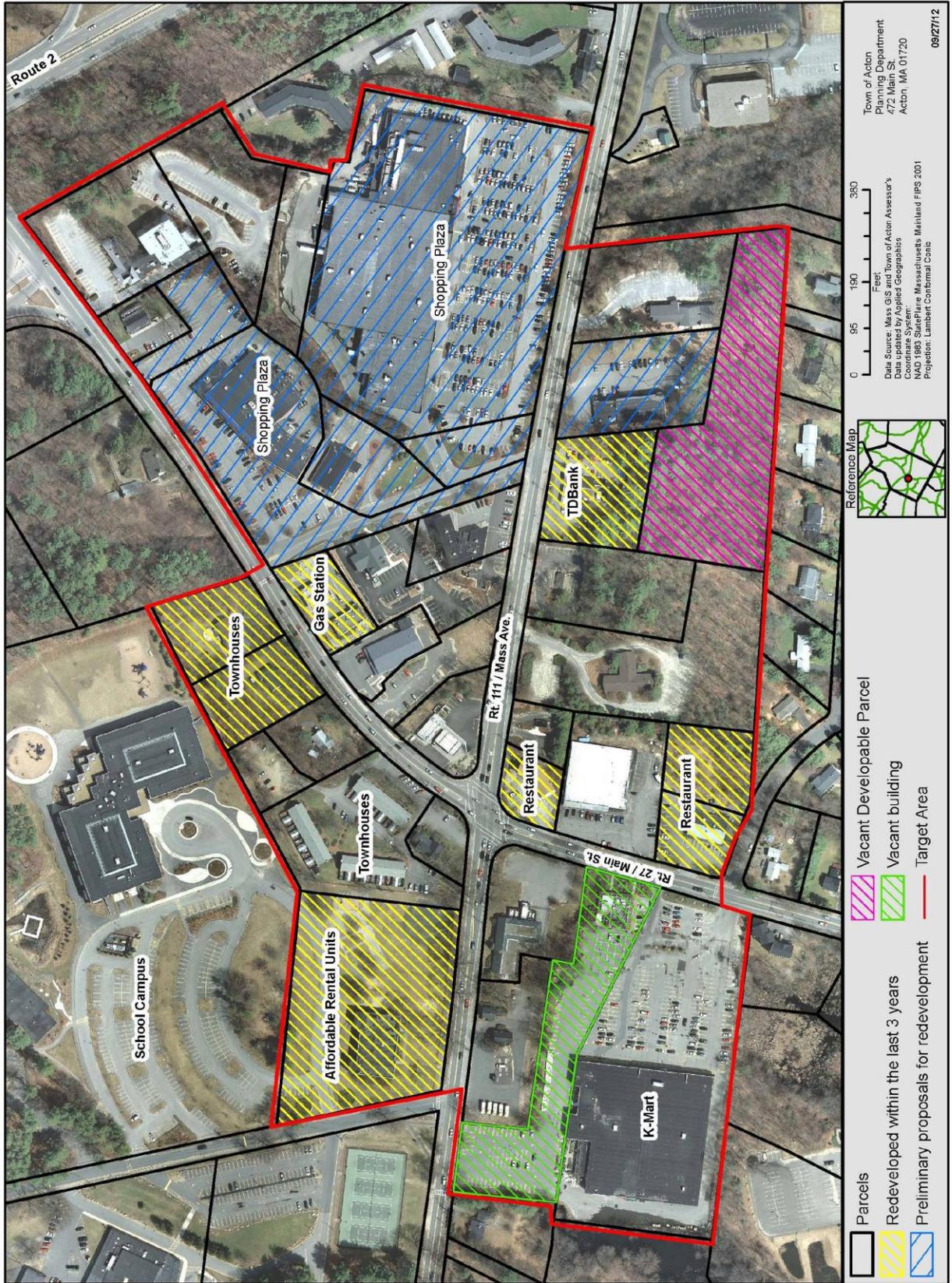
<p><b>Summary Statement:</b> Please describe your request in 25 words or less:</p> <p>This project will equip Acton with a roadmap to help reshape Kelley's Corner to better meet long-standing community goals for a walkable town center.</p>
---

**Application Deadline: 5:00 p.m. on September 28, 2012**



# Kelley's Corner Target Area Map

MDI -Implementation for Kelley's Corner, Phase 1. Best Practices and Next Steps towards reshaping Kelley's Corner.



### **Description of Issue to be Addressed**

The Acton 2020 Comprehensive Plan was adopted at the April 2012 Annual Town Meeting. This request for grant funding under the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance program is a direct response and first implementation step to one of the highest priorities of Acton 2020 – *develop Kelley’s Corner into a mixed use town center and prepare a development plan to accomplish this*. Residents stated they felt the town has no defined town center and expressed a strong desire to establish Kelley’s Corner as their walkable “downtown”. The project will be guided by the Acton Planning Department and the Town’s Acton 2020 (Phase 3) Implementation Committee.

Although, Kelley’s Corner is a compact area, its automobile oriented development pattern stems from the 1960s and earlier, and its infrastructure is tired. Some properties have undergone recent upgrades, facelifts, and redevelopment. Many other properties are ripe for redevelopment. Acton 2020 stresses the high importance that Actonians place on “good design” in any effort to redevelop and further develop Kelley’s Corner into a walkable town center. Equally important is a thorough understanding of its physical and economic conditions so that design guidelines, and zoning standards that flow from them, not only represent the Town’s long-term vision, but also are practical, realistic and effective in the short and medium term.

This project is intended as the first step in the development plan for Kelley’s Corner. With this grant application, the Town of Acton seeks funding for assistance by an experienced urban design professional in developing a framework and roadmap for the Kelley’s Corner development plan that puts town center design at the front and center. At the next (2013) Annual Town Meeting, the Acton Planning Department and the Acton 2020 Implementation Committee will seek Town funding for the Kelley’s Corner Development Plan. This grant project will jumpstart the plan and establish the foundation for a successful Town Meeting outcome.

### **History/Current Status of Kelley’s Corner**

Kelley’s Corner is a mixed use area at the intersection of Rt. 27/Main Street and Rt.

111/Massachusetts Ave. near the geographic center of Acton. Commercial uses dominate the area. Scattered multi-family residences are interspersed. The businesses consist primarily of retail and restaurant uses, extending east from this intersection towards Rt. 2. The Charter Road school campus and residential neighborhoods are adjacent to the commercial developments. Businesses are located in several strip mall shopping developments with a significant amount of paved parking in front. Major tenants are Roche Brothers, T.J.Maxx and CVS. K-Mart shares a large parcel on Main Street with a vacant McDonald’s building just south of the principle intersection. Several smaller buildings on separate parcels contain professional and medical offices, banks, and restaurants. A Sunoco filling station occupies a prominent corner in the intersection. A former muffler shop is now converted to a restaurant, and a bowling alley located on the south side of Rt. 111/Massachusetts Ave. has received a modest facelift. Recent redevelopments for TD Bank and Sovereign Bank forecast a more walkable town center – the bank buildings are at the street and parking/drive-ups are to the side and rear. Three parcels on the west side of Rt. 27/Main Street contain three different multifamily housing developments, two are recent redevelopments from small single-family homes. Kelley’s Corner has been served by sewer since 2002 and has capacity for future development if higher density zoning were allowed.

The Zoning Bylaw currently allows for .40 floor area ratio in Kelley’s Corner and requires design standards when the floor area ratio exceeds .20. This zoning scheme has not been effective. Most

development has not occurred greater than .20. As a result, design standards have not been implemented. There are 2.7 acres of undeveloped land and several parcels with redevelopment potential. Residents have voiced their desire to encourage mixed uses with smaller dwelling units near vibrant shops and restaurants with opportunities for socializing, running errands, dining, and for community gathering spaces.

Kelley's Corner has been a focus area for the town over the past 17 years:

- In 1995 the Town of Acton and The Land Use Collaborative, with funding through an EOCD Strategic Planning Grant, produced the 1995 Kelley's Corner Specific Area Plan. This document set out goals and objectives for Kelley's Corner regarding aesthetics, economic development, circulation and traffic, wastewater management and environmental protection goals. A main objective was to transform Kelley's Corner into a visually appealing, walkable, center that reflects the character of Acton. The partial adoption of the plan's zoning recommendation led to the current Kelley's Corner zoning scheme.
- In 1997 the Kelley's Corner Circulation Plan was added to address concerns related to traffic management in the area. This plan was debated and updated until 2001. It provided additional zoning recommendations to further the implementation of the Kelley's Corner goals and objectives. The 2001 Town Meeting voted with a majority in favor of these recommendations, but failed to muster the required 2/3rds majority to enact zoning changes.
- Many of the original goals for Kelley's Corner came up once again during the recent Acton 2020 comprehensive planning process. Acton residents expressed their frustration with the current conditions at Kelley's Corner. They voiced their desire for a greater mix of uses where smaller housing units are near vibrant shops and restaurants, for a walkable town center with opportunities for socializing, running errands, dining, and for community gathering spaces. Residents feel the current environment in Kelley's Corner lacks community space, and the required zoning and design guidelines to cultivate this type of development. The Town wants to direct future growth to Kelley's Corner from outlying areas using the transfer of development rights tool, but realizes the importance of first preparing an economically viable design plan for future development.
- In 2010, in conjunction with the visioning phase of Acton 2020 (Phase 1), the Town collaborated with the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy on the graduate student project "Open Neighborhood Project/ReVisioning Kelley's Corner" that resulted in energizing the Town's renewed focus and resolve to tackle the Kelley's Corner challenge.

## **Proposed Project Costs and Scope of Services**

### **Task 1: Review of Existing Conditions and Planning Goals**

The purpose of this task is to create a set of observations and baseline information about existing conditions in Kelley's Corner. On a parallel track, this step will compile and list Town planning goals which articulate desired changes from those existing conditions. This evaluation will take into account the patterns of existing development, its relationships to existing zoning, and underlying land and development economics.

This evaluation needs to take into account that there are a wide range of conditions, some of which are substantial barriers to change. For example, many of the sites are built out with active retail and commercial uses that will be difficult to substantially develop in the short or mid-term because of

the business and economic factors in play. Other sites are clearly underutilized, and may be subject to redevelopment in the short term. In between these circumstances, a number of properties are subject to modification rather than complete redevelopment.

Specific tasks to be accomplished include:

- Preparation of a study base plan.
- Review of existing zoning and preparation of written observations regarding the relationship to existing conditions and Town goals.
- Preparation of a list of Town goals for the area from previous plans and initiatives.
- Topography of existing site and development conditions.

#### Task 2: Case Studies

A series of case studies will be prepared of successful site improvements and redevelopments that have occurred within similar site and economic conditions for use as a source of ideas and reference. The case studies will evaluate improvements and redevelopment that would better match the Town's goals than undesirable current conditions. The examples may be from New England or may be national examples of moderate or low scale redevelopment or compact mixed use. Approximately five to seven case studies will be prepared including photographs or information regarding both the "before" and "after" conditions, methods used to reshape the areas, and applicable lessons for consideration. Project types will include:

- Modifications for conversion of "strip commercial" developments.
- Reorganization of auto-oriented site design to pedestrian-oriented configurations.
- Infill development for mixed-use to create a more vital district.
- Parking strategies to serve mixed-use districts.

#### Task 3: Design Guide Framework

In this task, a series of potential design guidelines will be prepared for the Town's consideration and potential adoption, or use for further refinement. The guidelines will consist of a series of site planning, site design, and basic architectural guidelines that would help reshape the character and quality of the district. The guidelines will be drawn from a variety of sources and will include specific concepts tailored to Kelley's Corner. The guidelines will address two conditions:

- Modifications to existing development.
- New development.

The documents will be intended as a communication tool and will be approximately ten pages in length along with examples and illustrations of desirable outcomes.

As a separate deliverable, an information paper will be prepared describing different methods for using design guidelines and standards that might be considered by the Town over time. This paper will also include recommendations for refinements in the existing zoning to better align future development with Town goals.

#### Task 4: Public Presentation and Discussion

Findings and observations assembled during this process will be the subject of an open public forum and discussions. A PowerPoint presentation will be prepared to present the following:

- A summary of key existing conditions and issues relative to Town goals.
- Case studies of successful redevelopment in similar circumstances.
- Summary of guidelines and their respective use.

- Open discussion including questions and answers.
- Resolution of outline and timetable for next steps.

*Summary of deliverables*

- *Base plans.*
- *Graphic and written observations on key issues and relationship to Town goals.*
- *Written and photographic summaries of five to seven case studies.*
- *Design Guide.*
- *Summary of observations on guidelines use and implications for zoning.*
- *PowerPoint summary presentation.*
- *Next steps chart*

**Project Budget**

Task 1:	\$2,000
Task 2:	\$2,000
Task 3:	\$4,500
Task 4:	\$1,500
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>

**Evidence of strong public/private partnerships**

Two private developers have approached the town with preliminary proposals; one new commercial development on the south side of Rt. 111/Mass Ave. and a shopping plaza façade and parking modernization scheme on the north side of Rt.111/Mass Ave. Both private developers have expressed their support for the Town’s redevelopment and planning efforts. They have supported the town’s recent submission for a Mass Works Infrastructure Grant to address Pedestrian Improvements. Both have indicated they are willing to provide some level of financial assistance to improve pedestrian and vehicular mobility. Another developer with property on the west side of Rt. 27/Main Street has offered to retrofit concrete sidewalks with granite curbing along his property to match the adjacent residential development.

**Positive outcomes expected as a result of the requested assistance**

The tangible outcomes listed under the “Summary of Deliverables” will help the town make the appropriate next steps to proceed with the Kelley’s Corner development plan, design guidelines, zoning changes and infrastructure improvements.

**Demonstration of a community’s ability to begin implementation of recommended action(s) within one to three months of completion of grant.**

Actonians have identified the redevelopment of Kelley’s Corner as one of their highest priorities and are ready to take action. The Acton 2020 Phase III Implementation Committee was recently established to carry out these priority goals. This committee will help drive the Kelley’s Corner redevelopment project. The Planning Department has staff available to assist the design consultant through the technical assistance phase and to support the committee through the recommended next steps. The Department has recently purchased visualization software to support community scenario planning efforts in response to this priority. The town will move forward immediately following the completion of this technical assistance grant by requesting funds at the next Town Meeting for continuing design consultant services.

**Support DHCD and commonwealth’s priorities and initiatives, commonwealth’s sustainable development principles**

This project is consistent with several commonwealth priorities and initiatives, specifically those set out in the Commonwealth’s Sustainable Development Principles and the MetroFuture Plan. The Town of Acton strives to follow these goals by focusing growth in the established center at Kelley’s Corner which in turn will relieve development pressures from limited open space elsewhere in town. The Town of Acton understands that providing clear design guidelines and an overall design plan for Kelley’s Corner will allow for predictable permitting, ultimately generating an economically vibrant mixed-use town center.

*Supported Documentation Referenced*

**Acton 2020 Comprehensive Plan**

**Pg. ES-8**

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-35852/ActonCommunityPlan%20-%20Volume1.pdf>

**Acton 2020 Website**

<http://acton2020.org/>

**Town of Acton Zoning Bylaw Amended through April 2012**

**Pg. 83**

<http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/659>

**1994 Kelley's Corner Specific Area Plan**

**Pg. 3-4**

<http://ma-acton.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/116>

**1997 Kelley's Corner Circulation and 2001 Revised Kelley's Circulation**

<http://ma-acton.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/117>

**2010 Open Neighborhood Project/ReVisioning Kelley's Corner with Tufts University  
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning**

<http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/864>

Applicant Information

**Name of Municipality or Public Entity**

Town of Acton

**Executive Officer or Designee for Project**

Roland Bartl

**Application Contact (if different from above)**

**Title:**

Planning Director

**Address:**

472 Main Street

**City:**

Acton

**State:**

MA

**Zip:**

01720

**Phone: ((xxx)-xxx-xxxx)**

(978) 929-6631

**Fax:**

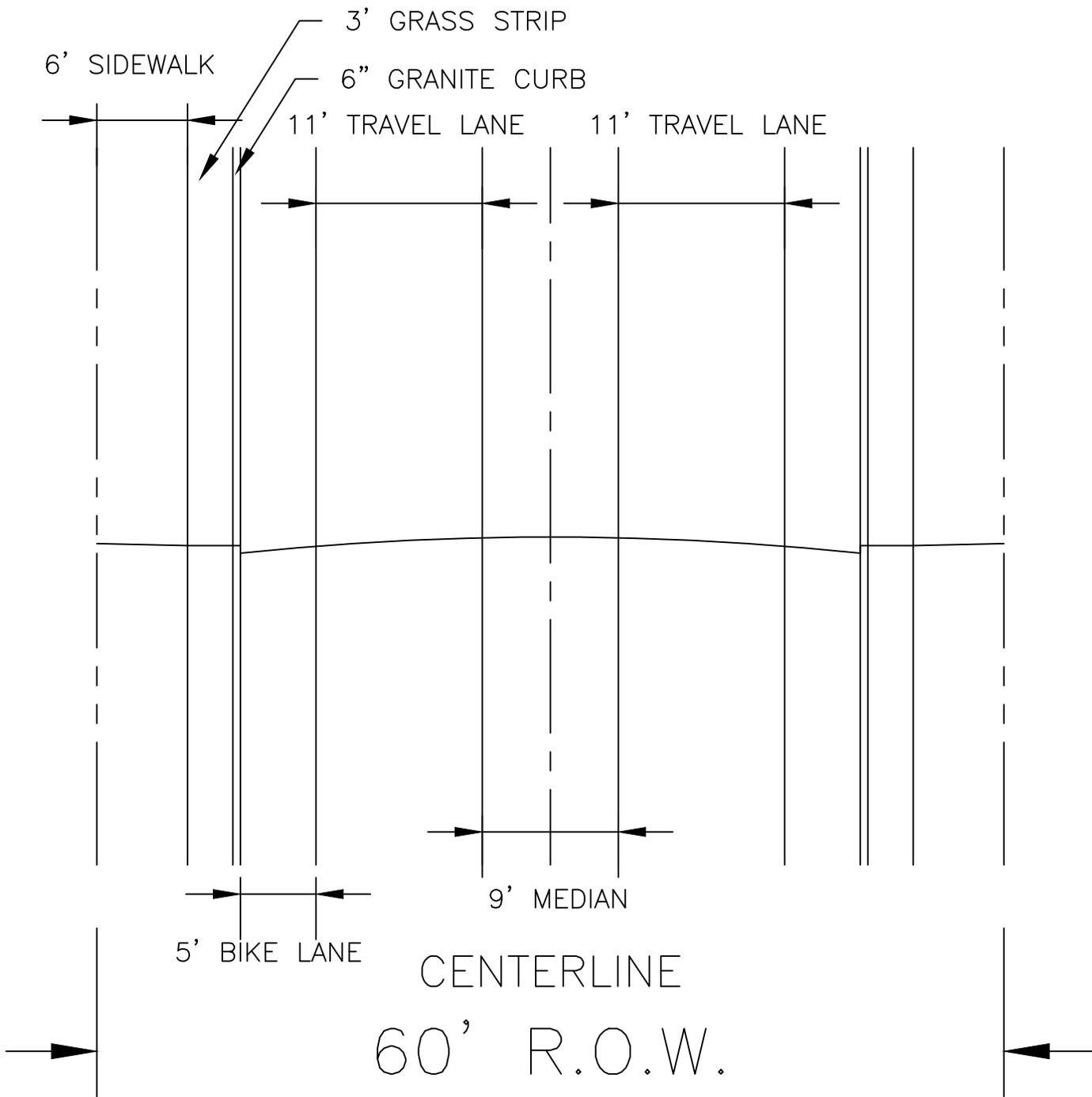
(978) 929-6340

**E-mail Address:**

rbartl@acton-ma.gov

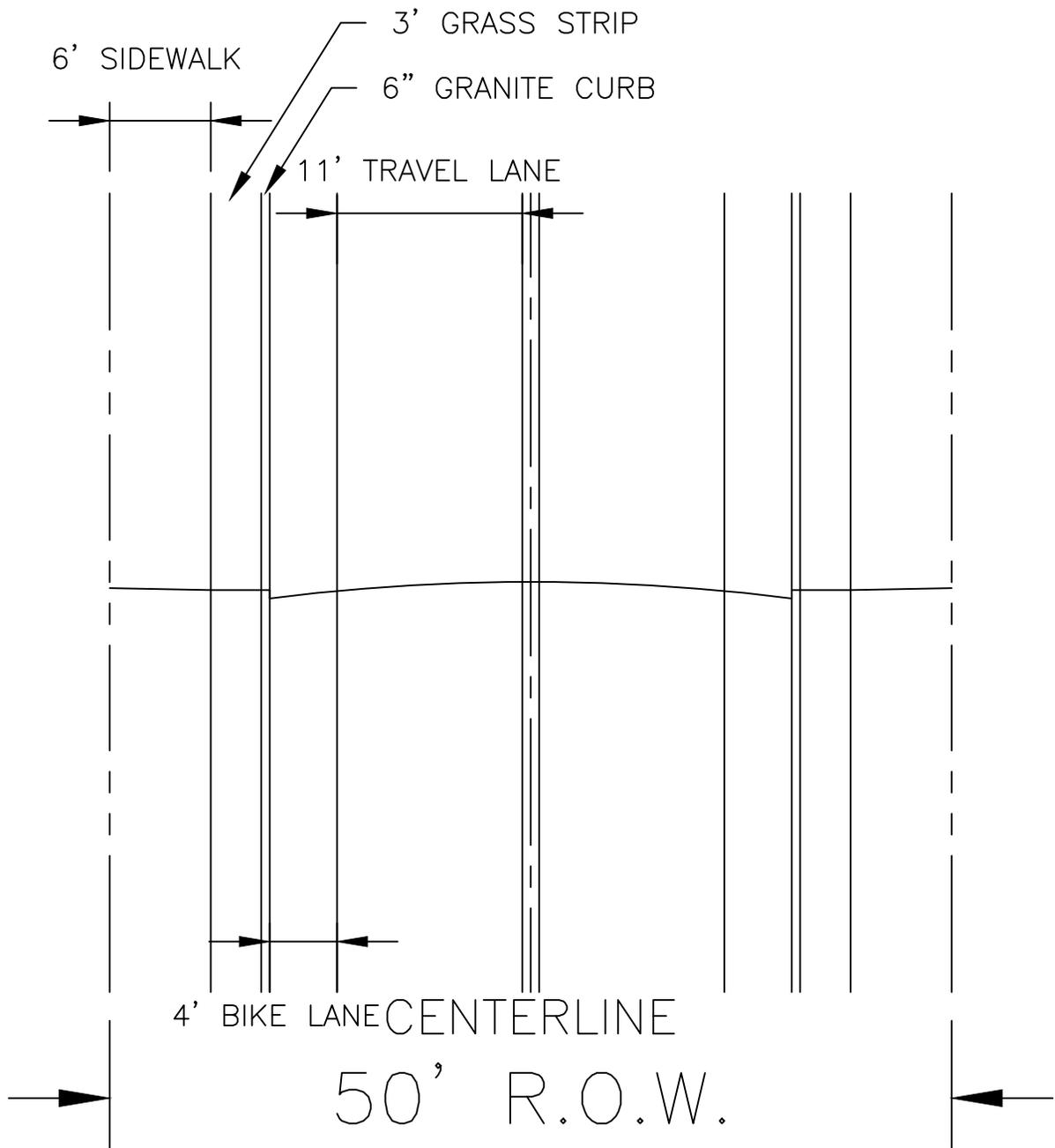


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DESIGN: PVC	KELLY'S CORNER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS	
DRAFTING: PVC		
CHECKED:	MASS AVE RIGHT-OF-WAY	
SCALE: 1" = 10'	DRAWING NO: 1	DATE: 8/9/2012

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 Sep 10, 2012 - 9:33am



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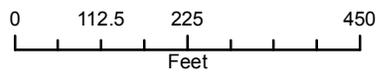
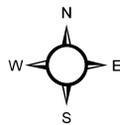
# Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project

## Private Development in Kelley's Corner

Attachment #4



-  Parcels
-  Redeveloped within the last 3 years
-  Preliminary proposals for redevelopment
-  Vacant Developable Parcels



Data Source: Mass GIS and Town of Acton Assessor's  
Data updated by Applied Geographics

Coordinate System:  
NAD 1983 StatePlane Massachusetts Mainland FIPS 2001  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic

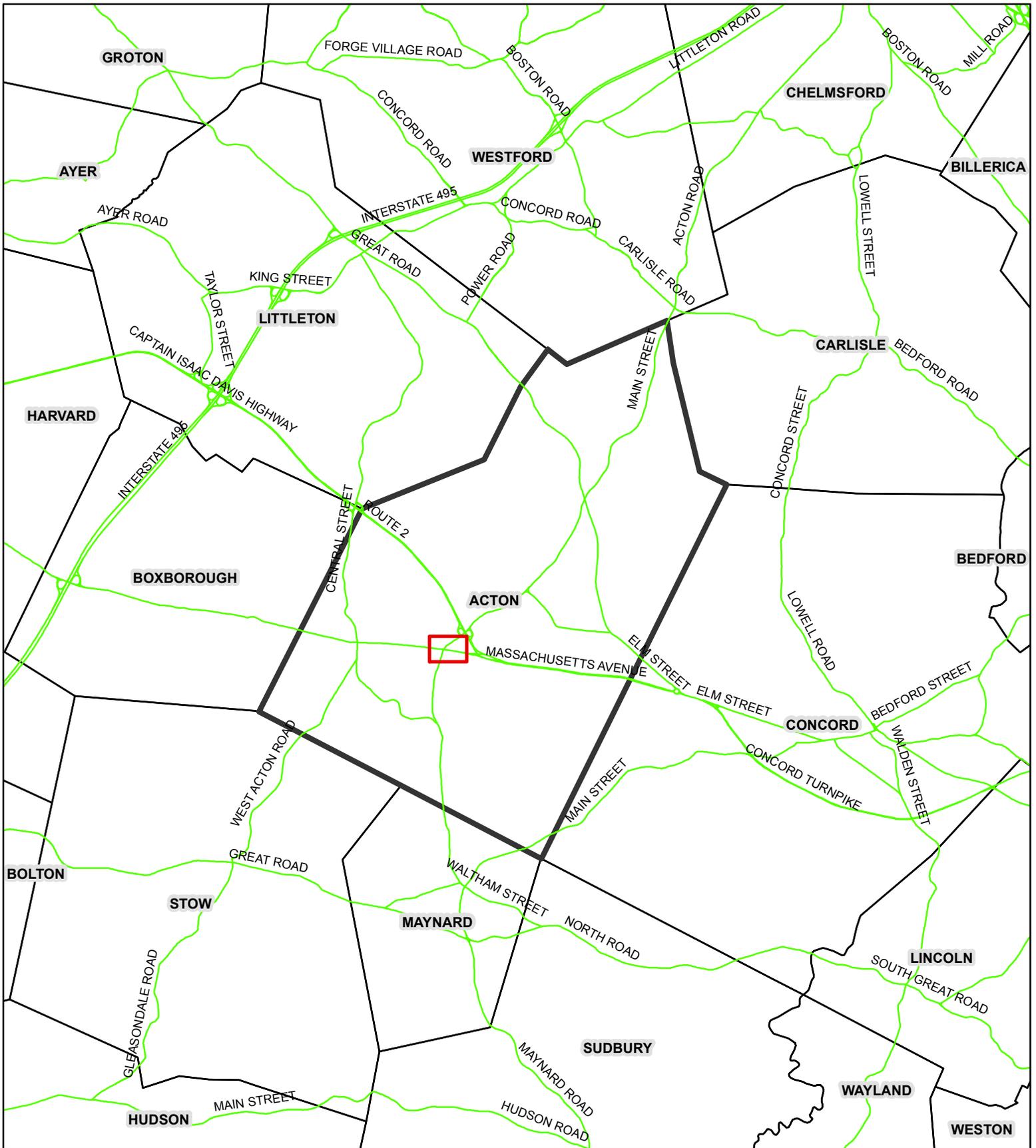
Town of Acton  
Planning Department  
472 Main St.  
Acton, MA 01720

09/06/12

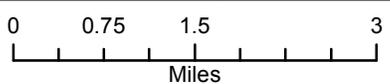
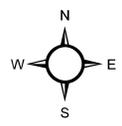
# Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project

## Locus Map

Attachment #5



-  Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project
-  Major Roads



Data Source: Mass GIS and Town of  
Coordinate System:  
NAD 1983 StatePlane Massachusetts Mainland FIPS 2001  
Projection:  
Lambert Conformal Conic

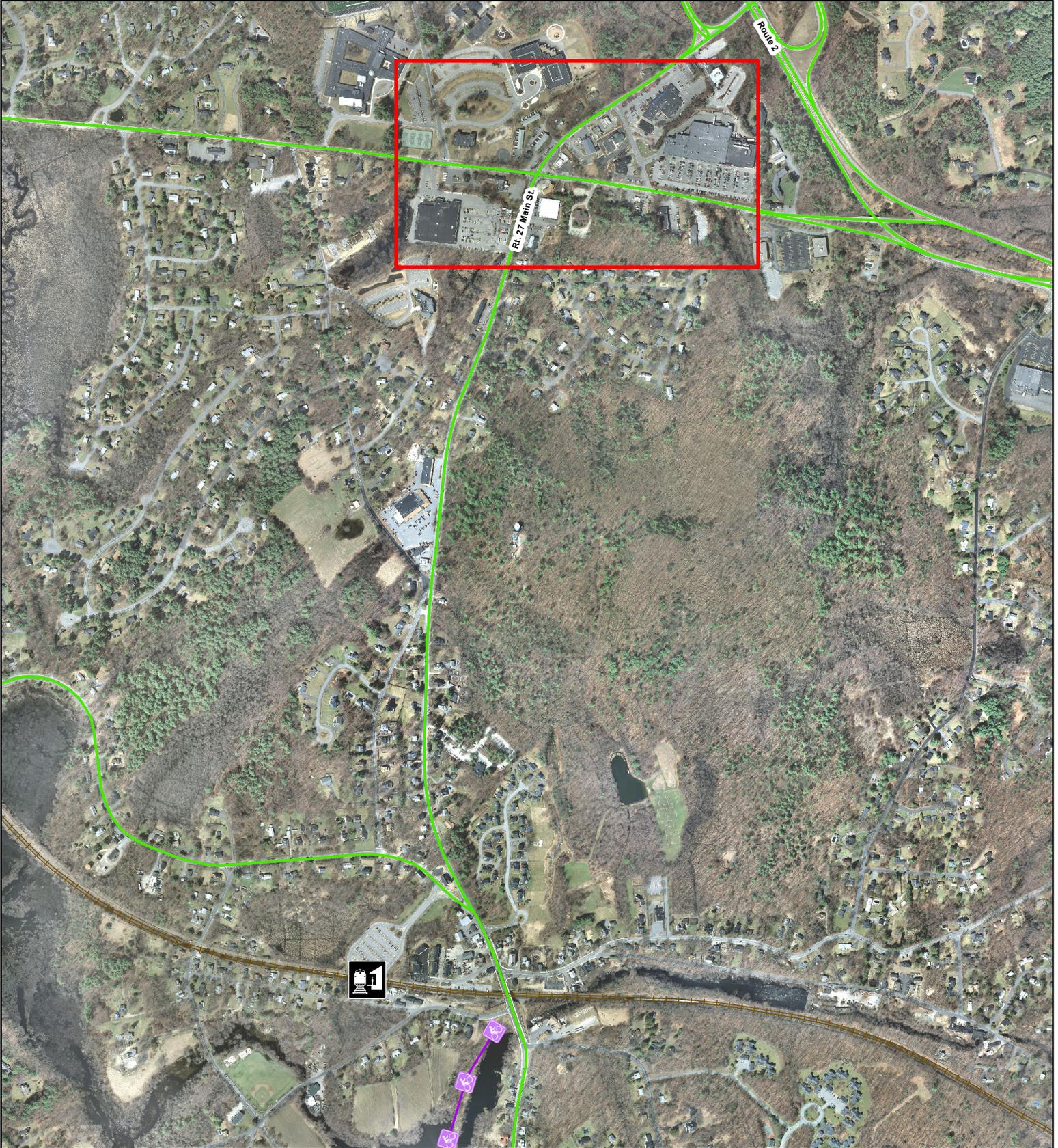
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Acton, MA 01720

09/06/12

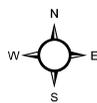
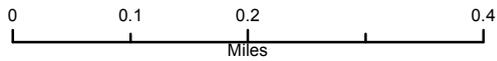
# Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project

## Proximity to Alternative Transit

Attachment #6



South Acton Train Station



Assabet River Rail Trail (Design Phase)

Major Roads

Fitchburg Line

Data Source: Mass GIS and Town of Acton Assessor's Data updated by Applied Geographics

Coordinate System:  
NAD 1983 StatePlane Massachusetts Mainland FIPS 2001  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic



Town of Acton  
Planning Department  
472 Main St.  
Acton, MA 01720

09/06/12

Budget and Sources

**6.1: Please provide a breakdown of the project budget in the following table.**

**This should include the cost of each project element (surveying, permitting, design, bid, construction oversight, construction, etc.) and should not be limited to the work which will be covered by the MassWorks Grant.**

**Please also indicate if the cost listed is an estimate or if the work has been bid and if MassWorks funds will be used for each element of work listed.**

**Please be advised that no more than 10 % of the total grant request may be used for design/engineering, except in communities with a population of 7,000 or less, where the communities are eligible to apply for full design/engineering costs along with a construction grant.**

Action	Cost	Cost Estimate OR Previously Bid	Requesting MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant support for this use (check box)
Survey *	\$82,500.00	✓ Cost Estimate Previously Bid	
Permitting *	\$50,000.00	✓ Cost Estimate Previously Bid	
Design/Engineering *	\$125,000.00	✓ Cost Estimate Previously Bid	✓
Construction *	\$2,900,000.00	✓ Cost Estimate Previously Bid	✓
Other:		Cost Estimate	
Other:		Previously Bid	
Other:		Cost Estimate	
Other:		Previously Bid	

Budget and Sources

<b>Other:</b>		Cost Estimate
		Previously Bid
<b>Other:</b>		Cost Estimate
		Previously Bid
<b>Other:</b>		Cost Estimate
		Previously Bid
<b>Total:</b>	\$3,157,500.00	

Please complete the following table with budget sourcing information.

Please identify all sources of funding that will support the proposed public infrastructure project, including the total requested MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant.

Please specify whether each funding source is secured or currently pending approval.

Source	Amount	Secured OR Pending	Additional Details
<b>MassWorks *</b>	\$3,028,750.00	Secured ✓ Pending	The Town of Acton is requesting 10% of the total amount for design and engineering funds and the remainder for construction costs as outlined in the project type and description.
<b>Municipality *</b>	\$128,750.00	Secured ✓ Pending	Some survey design will be completed in house, supplemental funds will be requested at Town Meeting.
<b>Federal *</b>	\$0	Secured ✓ Pending	No federal funds have been requested at this time.
<b>Other:</b>		Secured	
		Pending	
<b>Other:</b>		Secured	
		Pending	
<b>Other:</b>		Secured	
		Pending	
<b>Other:</b>		Secured	
		Pending	
<b>Total:</b>	\$3,157,500.00		

Please submit a certified copy of the vote taken by the executive body authorizing acceptance of state funding for this project.

[https://madhcd.intelligrants.com/\\_Upload/272001-Article57GiftsorGrants.pdf](https://madhcd.intelligrants.com/_Upload/272001-Article57GiftsorGrants.pdf)

If your community requires a vote to authorize acceptance of state funding for this project but the vote has not been taken, please explain the timeframe in which this will be *completed*. If a vote is not needed, please explain.

Please complete the following statement:

I, Steven L Ledoux, hereby certify that I am duly authorized to submit this application on behalf of Town of Acton and to agree to implement the MassWorks Infrastructure Program requirements on behalf of said municipality. I understand that the information provided with this application will be relied upon by the Commonwealth in deciding whether to make the MassWorks Infrastructure grant and that the Commonwealth reserves the right to take action against the applicant or any other beneficiary of the grant if any of the information provided is inaccurate, misleading, or false.

I hereby certify under the pains and penalties of perjury that the answers submitted in this application and the documentation submitted in support are accurate and complete.

Steven L Ledoux  
Name

Town Manager  
Title

9/10/2012  
Date

**Please print, complete, sign, date, and mail the following document within two (2) weeks of your application submission.**

MassWorks Certification Letter

**Please return an original copy of the signed authorization letter to:**

**MassWorks Infrastructure Program**

**Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development**

**1 Ashburton Place, Room 2101**

**Boston, MA 02108**

**From:** Roland Bartl  
**Sent:** Monday, September 10, 2012 2:08 PM  
**To:** Kristen Domurad-Guichard  
**Subject:** FW: Application Submitted

Roland Bartl, AICP  
Planning Director  
Town of Acton  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720  
978-929-6631

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**From:** help@intelligrants.com [mailto:help@intelligrants.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 10, 2012 2:07 PM  
**To:** Roland Bartl  
**Subject:** Application Submitted

Dear Grant Administrator, Thank you for submitting a 2012 MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program Application. Your application is currently under review and you will be contacted if additional information is required to complete the review of your application. The MassWorks application period is open through Sep 10, 2012. All applicants will be notified, by email, of the results of the application review by the end of October. If you have any questions, please contact the MassWorks program at [massworks@state.ma.us](mailto:massworks@state.ma.us). Thank you, The MassWorks Program

Development Project

**Is the applicant seeking grant funds to support a transportation project to enhance safety in a small, rural community with a population of 7,000 or less?**

**If yes, the applicant is not required to complete the remaining questions in the Development Project form.**

Yes  No

**Please select one of the following project types that best describe the private project or community plans to be supported by the infrastructure grant request.**

Housing development at density of at least 4 units to the acre

Economic development and job creation and retention

**Does the project support immediate growth in and around the project area?**

Yes No

**Is the development project fully permitted?**

Yes  No

**Please provide the anticipated private development project start date.**

**Please provide the total anticipated private investment in the private development project.**

**Please provide a detailed description of the private development project that includes the full scope of the project (including phasing details, if applicable).**

At this time, two private developers have approached the town with preliminary development proposals; one new commercial development on the south side of Rt.111/Mass Ave. and a shopping plaza façade and parking modernization scheme on the north side of Rt.111/Mass Ave. Both private developers have expressed their support for the Kelley’s Corner Pedestrian Improvement project and indicated they are willing to provide some level of financial assistance to improve pedestrian and vehicular mobility. At this time we do not have concrete plans from the developers, but have provided their contact information below.

**Please provide information related to the private development scope in the following table:**

<b>Type of Development</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial Housing Mixed-use <b>Number</b>
<b>Square footage of new development</b>	
<b>Number of rental units</b>	
<b>Number of homeownership units</b>	
<b>Total number of units</b>	0

## Development Project

**Total number of affordable housing units**

(Affordability definition based on DHCD standards.  
Please see guidance for DHCD Affordability standards.)

**Number of part time jobs to be created****Number of full time jobs to be created****Number of full time jobs to be retained****If available, please provide the following information for the private entity for this project:**

- **Company Name** Edens
- **Contact Information** Keith Hague; 21 Custom House Street, Suite 450, Boston, MA 02110
- **Phone** (617) 369-6609
- **Email** khague@edens.com

**Please provide a letter from the private entity confirming the intent to move forward with the proposed private development project, including the expected number of full time jobs to be created as a result of the private development associated with the proposed project.**

**Please provide a project schedule and the anticipated project milestones for the private development project. If necessary, please use the space provided below to provide additional details.**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Additional Details</b>
<b>Permitting</b>			
Design/Engineering			
Start Construction			
50% Construction			
100% Construction			

**Does the project support transit-oriented developments (that is, developments located within one-half mile of a transit station; further, transit station is defined as a subway or rail station, or a bus stop serving as the convergence of two or more bus fixed routes that serve commuters)?\***

Yes  No

**Does the project support the redevelopment of a previously developed site?\***

Yes No

**Does the project support a development containing a mix of residential and commercial uses, with a residential density of at least four units to the acre?\***

Yes No

**Does the project support the development of new housing (or a mix of uses including housing) with a residential density of at least four units to the acre?\***

Yes No

**Is the project regionally significant and supported by two or more communities?\***

Yes  No

**If yes, please attach letters of support from each community. At least one letter, from a community other than yours, is required.**

**Is the project located in a Gateway City? \***

Yes  No

**Is the project consistent with MassDOT's Complete Streets design guidelines that call for appropriate accommodation of all transportation modes (See the MassDOT Highway Division Project Development and Design Guide, Chapter 5)?\***

Yes No

**If no, please explain.**

**Is the project consistent with a local Master Plan?\***

Yes No

**Is the project consistent with a regional growth plan?\***

Yes No

**If yes, please identify the plan.**

MetroFuture

**Is the proposed project expected to support future growth, within the next five years, in and around the project area?**

✓ Yes No

**Is the municipal zoning in place to support the desired housing or economic development project?**

✓ Yes No

**If no, please explain.**

The Acton 2020 Master Plan recommends as high priority action items additional zoning initiatives to support housing and economic development in Kelley's Corner.

To answer the following questions, the Planning Ahead for Growth Online Mapping Tool can be utilized. The Planning Ahead for Growth Online Mapping Tool allows users to interactively display a number of geographic districts, as well as overlay multiple districts at one time. The Online Mapping Tool is available on the Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office website under the MassWorks Infrastructure Program page:

[http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map\\_ol/eohed\\_mapping.php](http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map_ol/eohed_mapping.php)

**Does this project fall within an Expedited Local Permitting District/Chapter 43D District?**

Yes ✓ No

**If yes, what is the name of the Chapter 43D District?****Does this project fall within a Growth District?**

Yes ✓ No

**Does your municipality have a Chapter 40R district?**

Yes ✓ No

**Is the proposed project located within a Chapter 40R district?**

Yes ✓ No

**Is the project located within the South Coast Rail Corridor region or the 495/MetroWest Development Compact region?**

Yes ✓ No

**If yes, does this project fall within a state identified Priority Development Area or a Priority Preservation Area?**

Priority Development Area

Priority Preservation Area

**If yes, what is the name of the Priority Area?****Please explain how the proposed project is consistent with the South Coast Rail Corridor Plan or the 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan. If it is not consistent, please explain how it is inconsistent with the plan and why your community is pursuing the project.**

Kelley's Corner is identified as a local priority development area in the 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan. The proposed project is consistent with the three overarching categories of the state's priority development areas. This project is also consistent with the Acton 2020 Master Plan, the State's smart growth Sustainable Development Principles, GreenDOT Policy Directive and the goals set forth in the MetroFuture Plan. The Town of Acton strives to follow these goals by focusing growth in the established business center at Kelley's Corner and relieve development pressures from limited open space.

The Town identified the redevelopment of Kelley's Corner as one of the highest priorities in the Acton 2020 Master Plan. Kelley's Corner is ripe for redevelopment; this existing mixed-use center contains areas zoned for the highest permitted multi-family housing density in Acton. It continually attracts new businesses. Kelley's Corner is capable of supporting additional high density development due to the availability of public sewer and predictable permitting. The present pedestrian environment is unsafe, especially for school children, persons with disabilities, and persons with baby strollers. Infrastructure, such as pedestrian ramps, push buttons and signals, are old and tired. These conditions make it difficult for people to access the businesses across the street and to navigate through the intersection toward the South Acton Train Station. This improvement project will foster alternative transportation means and safer pedestrian and bicycle travel thus reducing auto usage and accidents. Regional impact is small but not insignificant as these investments will bring benefit to a broader group of municipalities. Kelley's Corner serves as a destination shopping area to many in the surrounding communities. The Route 27 and Massachusetts Ave (State Route 111) is a major arterial intersection in Acton. According to Acton 2020, 79.5% of Acton jobs are retail trade, held by residents of surrounding cities and towns. These improvements will open opportunities for "last mile" connections to the South Acton Train Station to one of the main retail job centers in Acton.

**Has your community received a Green Community Designation from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs?**

✓ Yes No

**Will the proposed project impact or involve (directly or indirectly) a state owned highway or roadway?**

✓ Yes No

**If yes, what is the name of the state owned highway or roadway that will be impacted. If multiple highways or roadways will be impacted please list them.**

Rt. 111/Mass Ave.

**If yes, have you reviewed the project with your local MassDOT District Office?**

Planning Ahead for Growth

✓ Yes No

Project Schedule and Milestones

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Please provide a project schedule and anticipated project milestones for the public infrastructure project for which the community is seeking grant assistance.

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Additional Details</b>
<b>Survey</b>	8/1/2013	12/1/2013	
<b>Permitting</b>	7/1/2014	12/1/2014	
<b>Design/Engineering</b>	1/1/2014	6/1/2014	
<b>Bid/Contract</b>	1/1/2014	3/1/2015	
<b>Start Construction</b>	6/1/2015		
<b>25% Construction</b>	1/1/2016		
<b>50% Construction</b>	6/1/2016		
<b>75% Construction</b>	1/1/2017		
<b>100% Construction</b>	6/1/2017		
<b>Punch List</b>	6/1/2017	6/1/2017	

## Project Type and Description

**Please select one of the following project types that best describe your project. \***

Housing development at a density of at least 4 units to the acre

Transportation improvements to enhance safety in small, rural communities

Economic development and job creation and retention

**Is the population of the host community 7,000 or below? \***

Yes  No

**If yes, has the host community received a Small Town Rural Assistance Program (STRAP) grant in the last 5 years?**

Yes  No

### 2.3 Project Description

**Please provide a detailed description of the public infrastructure project for which you are requesting grant assistance that includes a full explanation of the uses for which this grant is being requested. Please provide a concise explanation of how the infrastructure project will advance the host community's housing, economic development or community revitalization objectives, or if your community has a population of 7,000 or less, how the project will enhance public safety and transportation.**

**If the MassWorks Infrastructure Program funding is intended for a specific element of a larger public infrastructure project, please describe that element and its relationship to the overall project.**

**Please be advised that no more than 10% of the total grant request may be used for design/engineering, except in communities with a population of 7,000 or less, where the communities are eligible to apply for full design/engineering costs along with a construction grant.**

The Town of Acton requests funding for the Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project. The scope of the project includes the Rt. 27/Main St. and Rt. 111/Massachusetts Ave. intersection at the core, and extending outward from there. The main components of the project will include approximately: 7,500 linear feet of new and reconstructed sidewalk with curbing, 3,750 linear feet of road widening to accommodate bike lanes, and about 1,000 linear feet of improved drainage and piping. Pedestrian and motor vehicle signal equipment upgrades and replacements, and improved crosswalks will be incorporated meeting ADA standards.

The MassWorks Infrastructure grant will fund the following:

Crosswalks:

- Reconstruction of all existing ramps w/ concrete ramps and tactile warning strips
- New crosswalks at: Rt. 111 and No-Name Road
- Enhancements at school crossings

Sidewalks:

- Reconstruction of sidewalks to 6 feet width.
- Replace existing bituminous concrete with concrete and granite curbing
- New sidewalks

Utilities:

- Locate utilities underground

## Project Type and Description

- Repair, replace and relocate signs
- Replace pedestrian signals; upgrade pedestrian buttons and signage for consistency and accessibility
- Repair old and failing drainage system; install new where needed

## Public Transit:

- Add a shuttle stop near school campus

## Road:

- Trench repair at No-Name Road
- Repair and add new berms along Rt. 27
- Widen Road to accommodate bike lanes on Rt. 27

## Bicycles:

- Add striping to include bike lanes

## Traffic Signal:

- Replace pedestrian signals
- Upgrade pedestrian buttons and signage for consistency and accessibility
- Relocate traffic signal posts away from sidewalks
- Possible extension of turning lanes

The MassWorks Infrastructure grant will help support 10% design funds and full construction cost of the project. Some of the survey and design for the project will be completed in house supplemental design funds will be requested at the next Acton Town Meeting.

The Acton 2020 Master Plan was recently adopted at the April 2012 Annual Town Meeting. As did previous master plans, Acton 2020 identifies Kelley's Corner as a core business district, and lists its redevelopment to higher density, including public infrastructure improvements, as one of the highest priority action items. The Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project is a direct response to this Acton 2020 Master Plan priority. The Town of Acton believes that transportation investments such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and streetscape improvements in Kelley's Corner will help generate an economically vibrant mixed-use center. This project also proposes the addition of a shuttle stop enclosure to work with both the existing "Minute Dial-A-Ride" and future transit programs in connection with the South Acton Train Station. This project will help to connect people to jobs, resources, and other transit modes as well as create a sense of place and walkability in Kelley's Corner. One of the Town's revitalization goals is to direct future growth to existing centers that have capacity for dense development. The infrastructure investments proposed in Kelley's Corner would advance the Town's objectives of creating opportunities for housing diversity and help spur local and regional economic development.

The current sidewalk conditions in Kelley's Corner will not be able to support the level of pedestrian activity needed to foster a vibrant mixed-use center. The sidewalks and ramps, identified in this proposal are in need of replacement, or major repair to improve accessibility and safety around Kelley's Corner.

Public Infrastructure Project

**Amount of funds requested**

\$3,028,750.00

**Name of proposed project**

Kelley's Corner Pedestrian Improvement Project

**Project site address**

263 Main St. / Intersection of Rt. 27 and Rt. 111

**Is the project site publicly owned?**

Yes  No

**Describe type of ownership (select all that apply).**

Public land

Right of Way

Leasehold

Easement

Other

**If other, please explain.**

**If not currently public, will the site be publicly owned by the project start date?**

Yes  No

**If not, please explain and include details about the nature, timing, and mechanism of the public acquisition.**

The site is publicly owned.

**Is the project seeking other sources of public funds?\***

Yes  No

**Has the project been subject of a local public hearing or meeting?\***

Yes  No

**Will the project be ready to proceed with construction in the upcoming construction season?\***

Yes  No

Readiness Checklist

Please provide a list of all permits and other actions required for this project, the current status of those permits, and the timeframe in which the permits will be obtained. Please specify all required local permits and the status of each.

Required Permit	Filing / Request Date	Anticipated Date of Issuance	Additional Details
MEPA: ENF MEPA: EIR/FEIR ✓ Order of Conditions Superseding Order of Conditions 401 Water Quality Certification Water Management Act Permit	7/1/2014	12/1/2014	We will continue to work with MassDOT District 3 to acquire any necessary access permits etc.
✓ MassDOT Access Permit	7/1/2014	12/1/2014	
Sewer Extension Permit ✓ Mass Historic Commission Review	7/1/2014	12/1/2014	
✓ Utility relocation Article 97 Land Disposition Other Permit: Other Permit: Other Permit: Local Permit: Local Permit: Local Permit: Local Permit: Local Permit: Local Permit: Local Permit:	7/1/2014	12/1/2014	