Kelley's Corner

The Corner that Connects Us

Frequently Asked Questions

Kelley's Corner Improvements - Capital Request $277,000

Why is Kelley's Corner a priority?

- Enabling the transformation of Kelley's Corner into a walkable town center is a key priority of the Acton 2020 Community Plan; Acton residents have expressed this in numerous meetings and surveys.
- Kelley's Corner is the gateway to the Town; it is at the Town's geographic center; and it is functionally joined with Acton's central school campus.
- Timing is right: New sewers but otherwise tired existing infrastructure (drainage, signals, sidewalks, utilities, etc); eager property owners and developers still [still ? (CK)]waiting for the Town's expression of will and direction; other future opportunities (e.g. K-Mart, Verizon); ~~no~~ few (CK) historic preservation ~~constraints~~concerns [I was looking for a less negative word, we don't want to suggest that paying attention to historic preservation is a bad thing] (CK); transportation access (immediate proximity to Route 2 and relative proximity to commuter rail). Section is fragmented(KH)

What will be accomplished with these funds?

- This is the first step to achieving Kelley's Corner goals identified in the Acton 2020 Plan. The scope of work includes:
  - Analysis of current real estate conditions, infrastructure conditions, commercial and residential market conditions and outlook, case studies, etc. ; recommendations for town center zoning changes and design guidelines for development and re-development on private properties in Kelley's Corner which supports that vision.
  - Preliminary engineering plans (25% complete design in MassDOT terminology) for public infrastructure improvements consistent with the established vision. Improvements could address elements such as traffic signals, utilities, drainage, sidewalks, crosswalks, wheel chair ramps, public transit support, bike lanes, sidewalk ramps and other features to be determined.
- The completed work will leverage as much as $3 million of additional public investments in Kelley's Corner (more than 10-times the Town's investment) by enabling Acton to submit a competitive MassWorks grant application to fund construction.

Comment [k1]: Reconsider "town center" language (KH)

How will this work be done?

- The Town will invite competitive proposals by qualified professionals to assist the Town with this project. Invitations will be made through a Request for Proposals (RFP) in accordance with State public procurement laws. The RFP will be vetted through several review steps before issuance.
- Through the RFP, the Town will seek to engage a highly qualified consultant team with professional expertise and experience in community planning, civil engineering, architecture, urban design, economic development, housing, real estate, project management, community outreach, and consensus building.
- The RFP will include a work scope that itemizes the multiple project phases and tasks to be completed. Consultant teams will be asked to use their proposals to modify, refine, and complement the project scope to bring to bear their own ideas, experience, and suggestions.
- Consultant teams will be selected in a competitive process by a selection committee of the Town, usually appointed by the Town Manager. The selection process will adhere to criteria and methods

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prescribed in the State public procurement laws and can involve extensive interviews. Final selection will be made taking into consideration qualification, ability to perform, and cost.

- A typical project outline for this kind of work includes:
  - Analysis of existing conditions, opportunities and constraints in all relevant areas including infrastructure, utilities, real estate market conditions, business climate, housing markets, traffic/transportation, etc.
  - Robust, repeated public outreach and engagement with all stakeholders: town residents; Kelley's Corner property owners, businesses and residents; neighbors around Kelley's Corner including the Junior High and High Schools students and teachers.
  - Visualizations of town center development scenarios informed by stakeholder participation and input; professional assessments of all existing conditions, opportunities, and constraints; and repeated reality checks with business professionals, and developers of commercial and residential properties. Visualization exercises will cover the public realm and private property in the Kelley's Corner area.
  - Iterative steps with stakeholder participation leading from a preferred town center vision for Kelley's Corner to (a) specific recommended zoning regulations and design standards for development and redevelopment on private property, and (b) specific design parameters for work to proceed in engineering the public infrastructure improvements and amenities.
  - Zoning and design standards will be considered and voted on by Town Meeting.
  - Public infrastructure engineering plans will be advanced to the 25% design stage (a MassDOT term for preliminary engineering plans with specific completed information and details as prescribed by Mass DOT).
  - MassDOT will hold a "25% design public hearing" to vet the engineering plans in a public forum. All stakeholders will be invited.
  - Adoption of town center zoning amendments for Kelley's Corner that attract and enable development and redevelopment for new jobs and housing, and completion and approval of the 25% public infrastructure engineering plans will place Acton in a highly competitive position to attain MassWorks grant funding.
  - Accordingly, upon completion of this work the Town will apply for MassWorks grant funding for the completion of the engineering plans to 100% and for the construction of the public infrastructure improvement. At this time the grant amount to do this work is estimated at +/- $3 million.

Comment [k2]: Should read more like action items and not facts (KH)

Comment [k3]: Should read like the rest of the items in this section (KH)

Mass Ave. is a State Highway, has anyone talked to Mass DOT?

- Mass Ave., including the intersection, is owned and controlled by Mass DOT. All work conducted within this area must be approved by Mass DOT. Main Street (Route 27) is a Town owned and controlled street.
- The Acton Planning and Engineering Departments met with Mass DOT in September 2012 to review the Kelley's Corner project. Mass DOT reacted with encouragement and provided the Town with traffic count data for this intersection.
- It is in the State's interest to work with the Town to make these necessary improvements and upgrades while the Town seeks funding through the MassWorks grant program. This program, when applied to MassDOT owned assets, supplements MassDOT's otherwise available funding for infrastructure maintenance, upgraders and improvements.
- Engineers working on State Highway projects must be State pre-qualified under MassDOT standards.

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Why can't we break the project funding into two or more component phases?

- The Kelley's Corner project is proposed with two components that inform one another and should be conducted in-tandem for efficiency and consistency.
- Information gathered from existing/projected conditions studies for zoning and design guidelines will inform the engineering plans— just as the engineer plans will inform the recommended zoning and design guidelines. Public comment is at its best when parties are aware of all constraints and possibilities. If the zoning and design framework component is completed without the engineering process, important information will be missing. This could very likely create conditions in zoning that are impossible to achieve and trigger the need to redo several aspects of the project over again.
- Cost efficiency and transparency will be best achieved by proceeding with both components concurrently.

Why do we need a new study, we already have several former studies?

- The 1995 and 1997 studies will be used as much as possible, but a lot has changed in Kelley's Corner since 1997-1995. A public sewer system was installed, two single family homes were converted into multifamily condos, the Old High School was converted into apartments, property ownership has changed, and a traffic light was installed on Rt. 27 in South Acton which changes traffic patterns at Kelley's Corner.
- New visualization software is available to help in the translation of zoning to the visualization of real life results.
- Your involvement with this process can ensure its success. The increased amount of community involvement will ultimately mean a community that is invested and a project that is successful. (KH)

How do we know change will happen this time?

- The 4-year Acton 2020 process found its way and focus over and over again on Kelley's Corner. Momentum is strong from the Acton 2020 process to succeed with the next step at Kelley's Corner. With a robust public outreach, all stakeholders, property owners and businesses in and around Kelley's Corner, neighbors, and all of Acton's residents will have input through this process.
- The Acton 2020 Committee has pledged that with the support and backing of Acton's leadership, they will do whatever it takes to succeed.
- State funding for construction is available to fund public infrastructure at Kelley's Corner.

Comment [k4]: Rearrange order; put last bullet first, third bullet second, second bullet last, first bullet third (KH)

Why now?

- Spur private investment. Commercial developers and property owners in the Kelley's Corner area stated that they want to contribute to and understand the town's zoning and design priorities before making substantial investments of their own, and that investments in the public infrastructure are crucial for leveraging private investment in the area.
- Every year that we delay tackling this project means missed opportunities to provide our Town's input of the vision for Kelley's Corner resulting in an end product that is potentially inconsistent with the Town's vision. (KH)
- If the Town does not invest now, then when? There will always be competing financial priorities.
- Leverage substantial State grant money while Acton 2020 Community Plan is relevant. DHCD, the MassWorks grant administration agency, looks for project consistency with current and relevant community plans. Every year of postponement reduces currency and relevance of the Acton 2020 Plan.

DRAFT

- DHCD, the MassWorks grant administration agency, looks for project consistency with current and relevant community plans. Every year of postponement reduces currency and relevance of the Acton 2020 Plan. We need to leverage substantial State grant money while the Acton 2020 Community Plan is relevant. (KH)
- Every year delayed may also mean missed opportunities, such as a developer making a redevelopment decision without waiting for the Town and thus inconsistent with Acton's vision for a transformed Kelley's corner; or a missed opportunity to access State grants.
- Commercial developers and property owners in Kelley's Corner area stated that they want to contribute to and understand the Town's zoning and design priorities before making substantial investments of their own, and the investments in the public infrastructure are crucial for leveraging private investment in the area. We can spur private investments when we start making advancements in Kelley's Corner. (KH)
- If the Town does not invest now, then when? There will always be competing financial priorities. (KH)

How will the traffic problem be solved?

- This question can be best answered after the analysis and preliminary engineering plans are completed.
- Efforts at Kelley's Corner solely geared towards solving a regional traffic problem would not result in the stimulus of private investment needed to transform Kelley's Corner; rather, if implemented, would take private property and destroy opportunities to create a Town Center.
- The appropriate focus will be on traffic, transportation, and circulation improvements designed to support Kelley's Corner as a Town Center for Acton residents, businesses, and anybody who wants to enjoy, shop, gather or do business in the area.

Comment [k5]: Lead off more positively with a bullet that says something like "traffic is foremost on the agenda as it relates to the improvement of Kelley's Corner. Also move last bullet to first bullet. (KH)

Will the Town use eminent domain, and take property?

- The Town's strong preference is to avoid use of eminent domain. This capital request will fund the preliminary infrastructure improvement plans which will identify right-of-way and property boundaries. This plan will allow the Town to evaluate constraints of the project.

How are we going to deal with K-Mart?

- The Town's best chance at turning this property around is by using zoning and design guidelines to influence commercial and residential redevelopment before it is defined for us. If the property is redeveloped within the constraints of the current bylaws, we will most likely see more of the same—but if we change our zoning bylaws and create town center design guidelines we can steer redevelopment in Kelley's Corner in a new direction.

Why can't a developer improve the public infrastructure in Kelley's Corner?

- There is a role to play for developers and commercial land owners in improving public infrastructure as needed to support their development projects. This can work well for big projects where one or very few developer/real estate parties control large land areas for significant development or redevelopments; or for small projects with small public improvements.
- Kelley's Corner property ownership is too fragmented to support and finance cohesive public infrastructure improvements at a fairly large scale. For a Town Center transformation, Kelley's Corner needs public stimulus.

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