

From: Kevin Aderer [<mailto:k-aderer@ciaraldi.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2013 7:51 PM
To: Margaret Busse
Cc: Dad; karen@rosadokar.com
Subject: Re: Acton 2020 Update: Meeting on Kelley's Corner

Hi Margaret,

Thanks for all the work you folks are putting into the Acton 2020 project! I'm sad to be so far away from the process, and grateful to those who are making it happen.

I'm part of the exodus of young people who grew up in Acton and left immediately upon graduating. I live far away, so I won't be able to make the meeting. Since I'd like Acton to be a place I'd move back to one day, here's what's important to me in the composition of Kelley's Corner:

1. **Community Space.** Acton needs a variety of central indoor spaces for people to give workshops and classes, to hold dances and other social events, to have meetings, or to rent for private use. I'd like to see one of these in Kelley's Corner. Outdoor open space serves the same function in fair weather, if well laid-out.

2. **Businesses that engage people, and connect us to something more.** We have a tendency to focus on simple retail (clothing, electronics, home goods, trinket shops) as the major kind of desirable storefront, but retail doesn't foster fulfilling social interactions. Part of what makes Acton so hard for teens is that there's nothing to do besides going shopping. For lack of other options, youngsters in Acton learn shopping to be our major reason for leaving the house (besides school) and our primary social activity, which I think is a little sick. Some businesses offer more than just the items they sell. Businesses that anchor and define communities include:

-Food co-ops. Fresh organic produce is a must in any village center. That's part of what prevents the South Acton village center from blossoming; without quality groceries people have no reason to visit regularly, and South Acton residents must depart to other village centers to meet their basic needs. Co-ops offer numerous modes of engagement and draw many times more people in to regular interaction as compared to, say, Idylwilde, which provides essentially no modes of interconnection. Co-ops are even more powerful when attached directly to community space.

-Tea/coffee shops and cafes, especially those which offer something unusual to eat

-Businesses (such as tea/coffee shops or bookstores) which offer regular performances of music, storytelling, or poetry reading, or open mic nights

-Businesses that offer classes, such as music stores, craft shops, or gardening shops

How can we encourage businesses such as these, and make sure they have the infrastructure to meet their specific needs?

3. **Independent ownership.** Businesses owned by people from Acton will spend their profits in Acton, which nourishes Acton and increases accountability. How can we create incentives for independent business? How can we level the playing field between them and retail giants? Can we offer informational or technical support, or financing, to help them get rooted?

The theme here is **connection within Acton**. That's what I think we all want to foster, is stronger community. Where I live now, Montpelier, VT is a very small community of only 7,900 people which supports all of the things I've named above in abundance. Acton is a community 2.6 times as big that supports only a thin smattering of these things, dispersed around 6 town centers. Acton can support the infrastructure to spawn a variety of these nexuses of interconnection through engagement.

I'm continually excited to see pedestrian and cycling access as a high priority in development plans in

Acton. That is much appreciated and very important to me and other family members who still live in Acton.

I don't know if you're familiar with it, but a definitive resource on design patterns for building successful communities is "A Pattern Language," by Christopher Alexander. It is a very digestible source of design wisdom for creating spaces that meet people's needs on different scales, from the regional level down to the layout on individual rooms. Somewhere in the middle, there is quite a bit of consideration devoted to design patterns for village center spaces appropriate to the scale of Kelley's Corner. The relevant sections can be easily located in the table of contents. I am helping to shape the layout of a small community in Vermont, and this book has proved to be my most valuable reference material, and I have not been able to find any similar guiding resources. I urgently recommend it to all involved in the revival of Kelley's Corner.

Thanks for your time, and I hope this process goes smoothly and fruitfully for you. I'd love to chat about any of these thoughts, please feel free to email or call.

-Kevin Aderer

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