

# Acton Town Center Planning

## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

Community Workshop:

*Alternatives and  
Choices*

# AGENDA

## **1. Introduction**

- Overview of the Improvement Initiative
- Planning and Design Context
- Guiding Principles
- Summary of Tonight's Alternatives

## **2. Circulation and Roadway Alternatives**

- Presentation
- Breakout Groups/Discussion

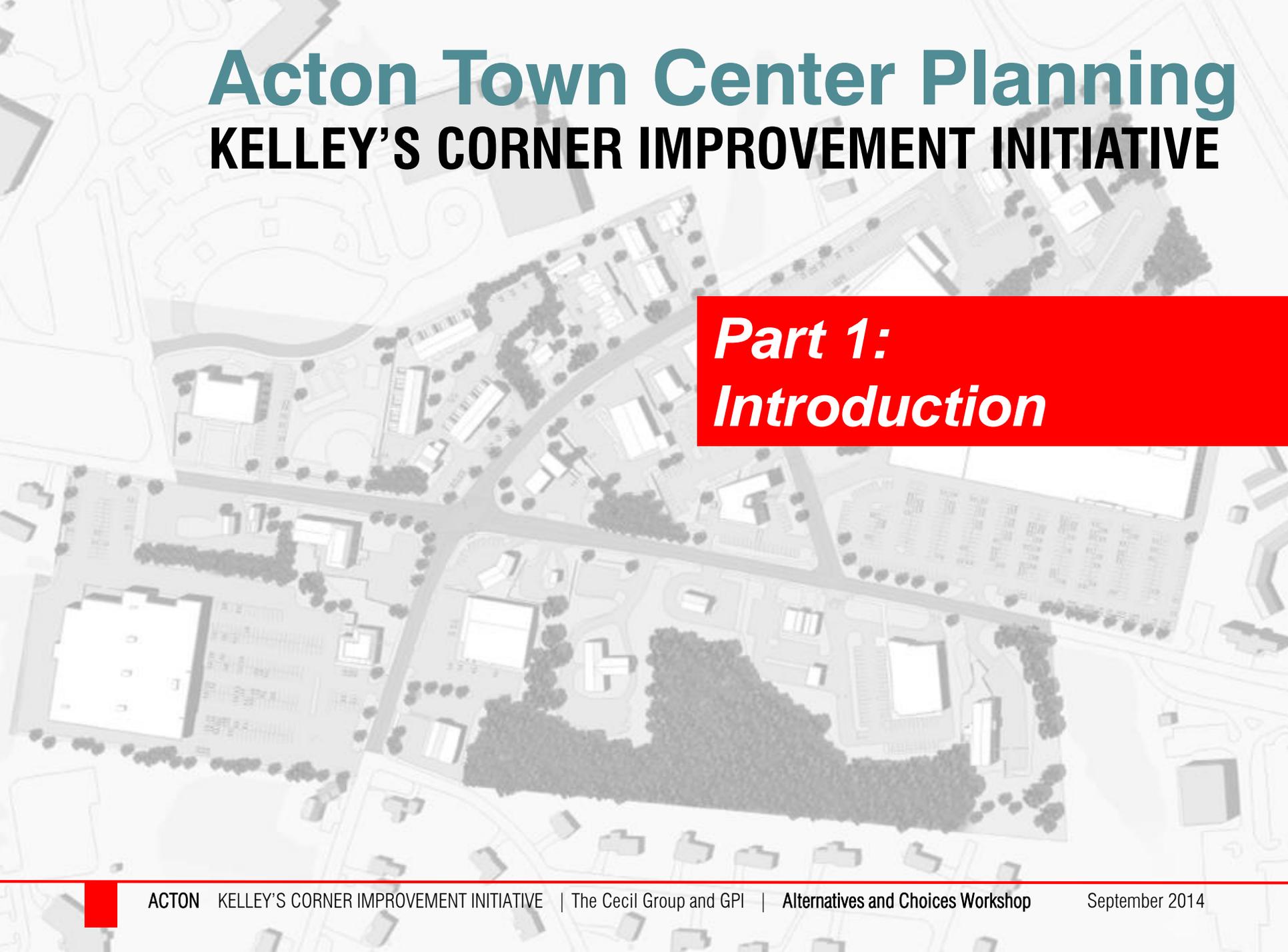
## **3. Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives**

- Presentation
- Breakout Groups/Discussion

## **4. Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives**

- Presentation
- Breakout Groups/Discussion

## **5. Final Observations and Meeting Summary**



# Acton Town Center Planning

## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

### *Part 1: Introduction*

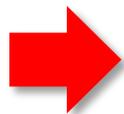
# OVERVIEW OF THE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

## Purposes

- Establish a program of specific infrastructure designs to improve and balance all of the circulation modes in Kelley's Corner: vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles and transit access
- Create a coordinated land use and development strategy in concert with infrastructure planning, and implement the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Acton 2020

## Steps

- **Evaluation** – Existing conditions and trends for the future
- **Community Consultation** – Workshops and interviews
- **Alternatives and Choices** – Major options for the future
- **Community Input** – Workshops and input on the choices
- **Draft Design and Zoning Concepts** – Preferred approaches
- **Community Review** – Discussion of the design and zoning concepts
- **Final Design Concepts and Zoning Recommendations**



# OVERVIEW OF THE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

## Public Input: Previous Meetings and Discussions



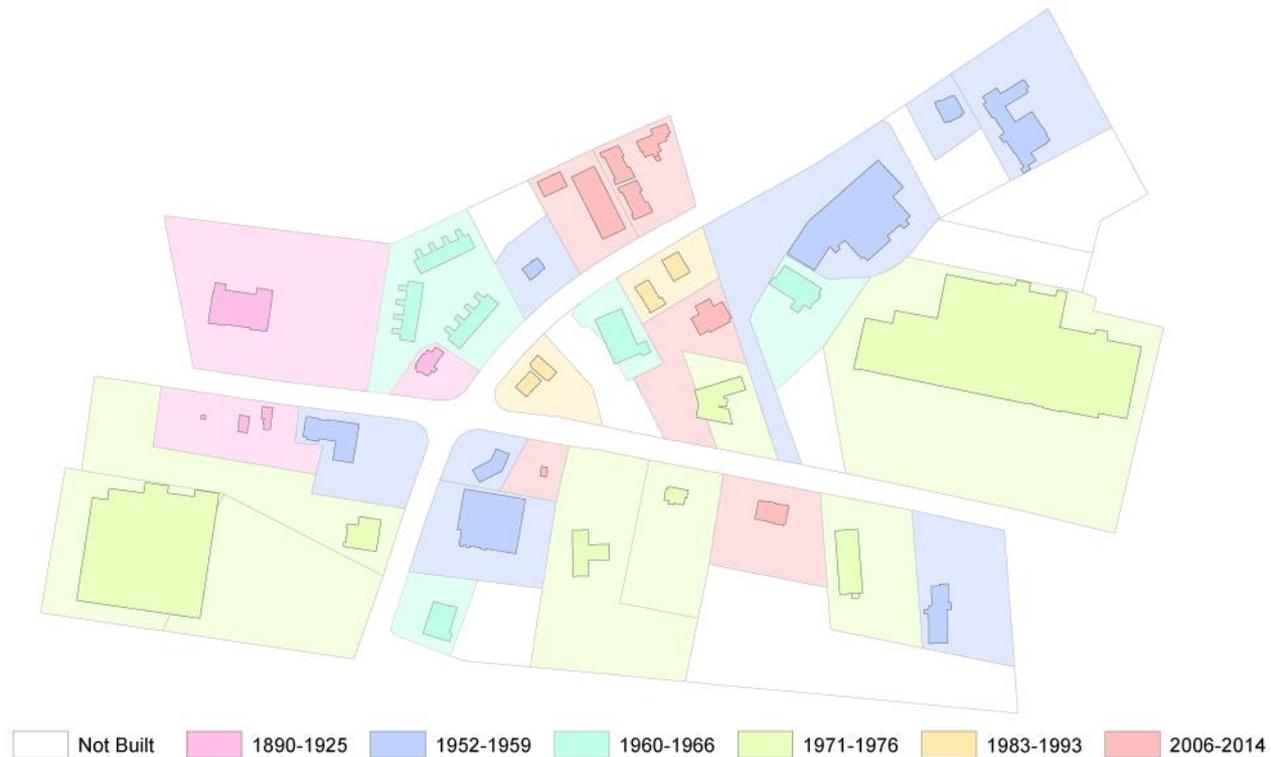
# PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

## Improvement Area Boundaries



## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

**The age of current buildings shows continuous change.** The historical development of Kelley's Corner may be seen today in the ages of the buildings – change that will continue into the future.



## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

**The pattern of development was not planned.** Businesses adapted to odd-shaped lots, provided the parking they needed where it was close to the roadways. Driveways, access and lawns crowded into the right-of-way, with little concern about sidewalks, landscaping or the overall appearance of the district.



Parking lots and driveways in Kelley's Corner today

## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

**The development pattern is inconsistent and difficult to change.** There is not a great amount of empty land, and buildings and their parking areas occupy most of the spaces.



Aerial photo of Kelley's Corner today (Bing)

## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

**In terms of commercial and retail uses, the outlook is relatively stable** and suggests that incremental additional space or redevelopment of existing sites is most likely.



## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

**Regional market competition and roadway congestion** are constraints on the economic viability of the area over time.



Weekday Traffic Today

## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

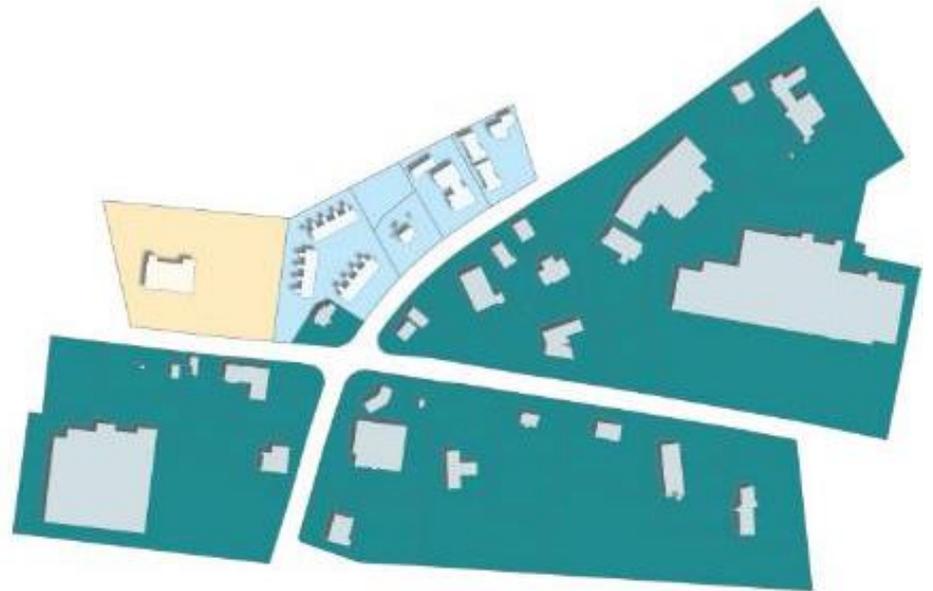
Continued success will require new public investment to **improve mobility and reduce congestion** to make the area more attractive as an area to shop, work, live and visit.



Pedestrian trendlines from public workshop, 2014

## PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

Continued success will require **adapting the Town's zoning** to *allow* and *encourage* private investment that may take advantage of market opportunities



Existing Zoning in Kelley's Corner

# Planning and Design Principles

An aerial site plan of a campus, likely a university or government complex. The plan shows several large, rectangular buildings with flat roofs, interspersed with parking lots and clusters of trees. A central road or walkway runs through the site, connecting different areas. The overall layout is organized and functional, with clear boundaries between buildings and open spaces.

## PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### Principles

- Kelley's Corner ought to change, and can change
- Kelley's Corner will change whether one wants it to or not (*the issue is how best to plan for this change*)
- The Town of Acton should actively seek to guide this change where possible
- With this guidance, Kelley's Corner should become a recognizable and coherent center of Town
- Traffic and circulation should be improved using a holistic approach that accommodates the needs of vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike
- Zoning, design guidelines, and public investment should reinforce these goals

## PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### Components of the Plan

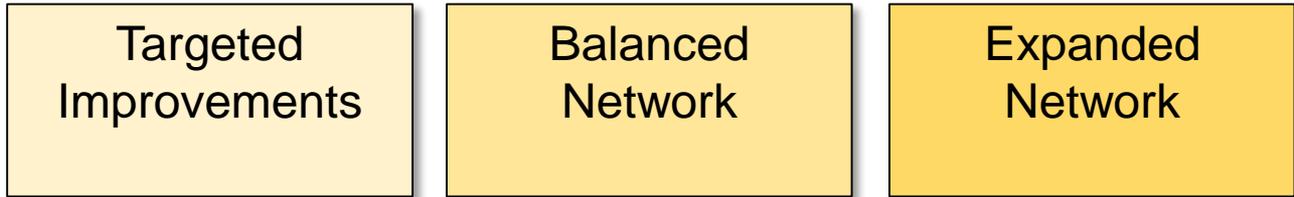
- Shared parking will be included where possible (to limit total parking to what is necessary to support the uses)
- Curb cuts will be reduced and redesigned to ensure safe conditions
- Traffic and circulation improvements will implement the Complete Streets policy
- Multi-family housing will be allowed as part of the mix of land use and redevelopment solutions
- Private development will include public amenities
- The streetscape and landscape elements will reinforce the desired character and create safer and more comfortable streets

# Alternatives and Choices

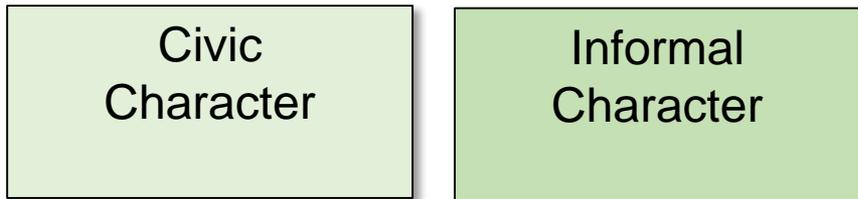
An aerial site plan of a campus, likely a university or government building complex. The plan shows several large, rectangular buildings of varying sizes, some with multiple wings. There are numerous parking lots, some with individual parking spaces marked. A network of roads and walkways connects the buildings and parking areas. A large, dark green area representing a wooded or landscaped area is located in the lower central part of the plan. The overall layout is organized and structured.

# ALTERNATIVES

## Circulation and Roadways Alternatives



## Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives



## Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives



# Acton Town Center Planning

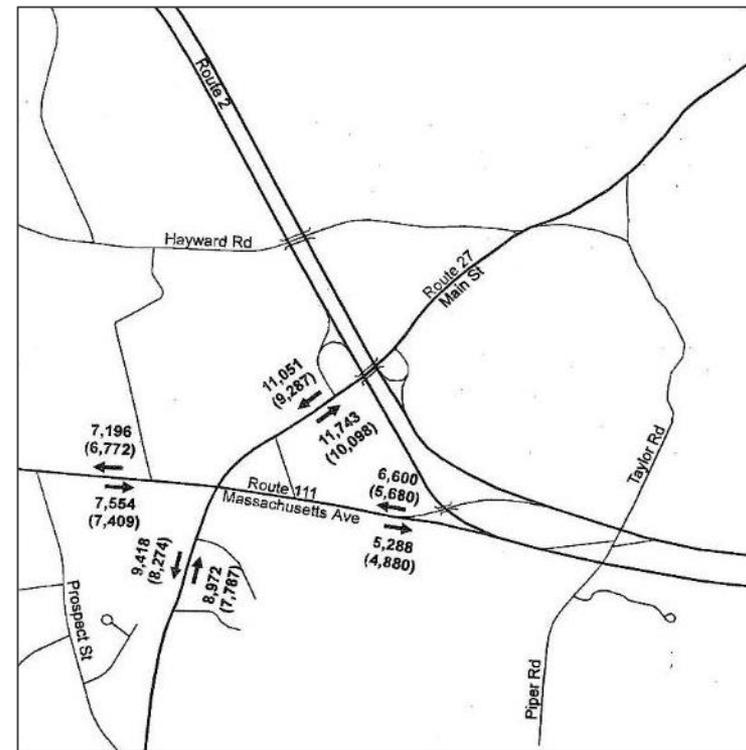
## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

### *Part 2: Circulation and Roadway Alternatives*

# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES

## Circulation and Roadway Design Context

- a. Regional traffic will not be stopped but will not increase
- b. It should be easier for residents and patrons to access Kelley's Corner
- c. The entire area should be more attractive and safe for walking and biking
- d. The Town and the State have adopted a Complete Streets policy which will apply and which promotes safe, attractive and environmentally sustainable design that accommodates all modes (vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit)

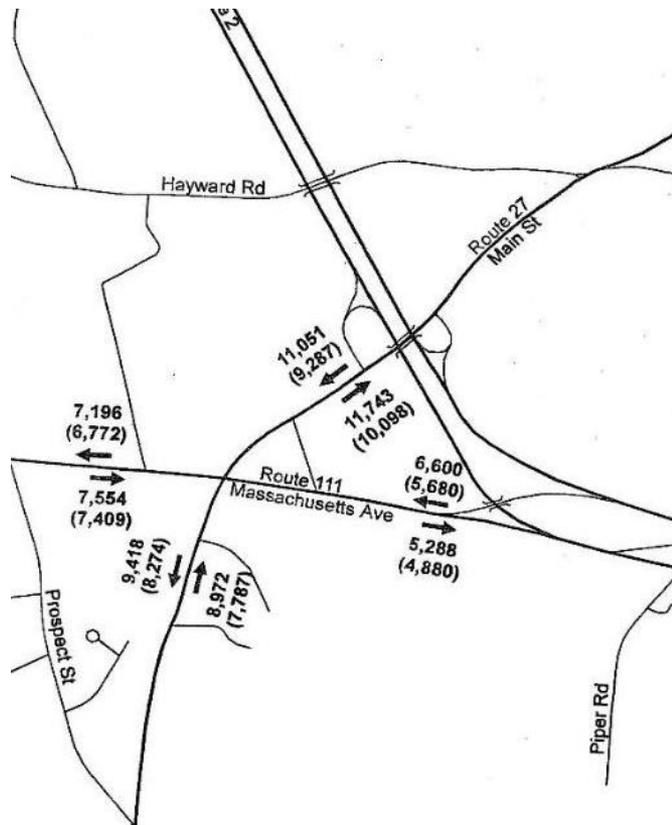


Weekday Traffic Volumes, 1996

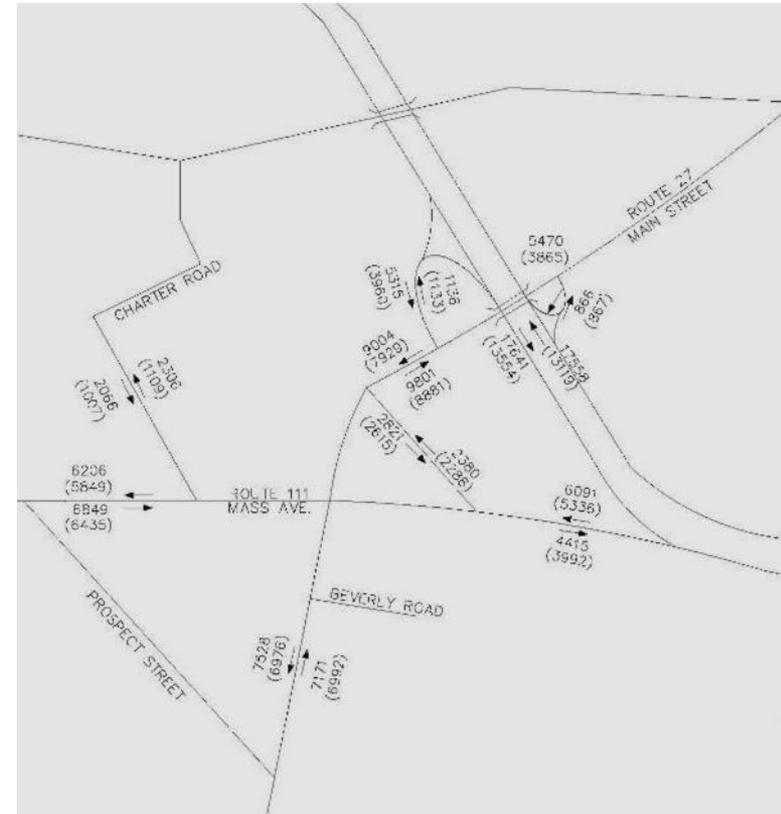
# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES

## Data

- Traffic today is approximately 15% lower than 1996 volumes
- This trend is consistent with similar areas in the region



**1996**



**2014**

Weekday – Weekday peak hour volumes  
(Saturday) – Saturday peak hour volumes

# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: Targeted Improvements

## Design Character

- Existing typical conditions



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES

## Circulation and Roadway Alternatives

Targeted  
Improvements

Balanced  
Network

Expanded  
Network



## Circulation and Roadway Alternatives

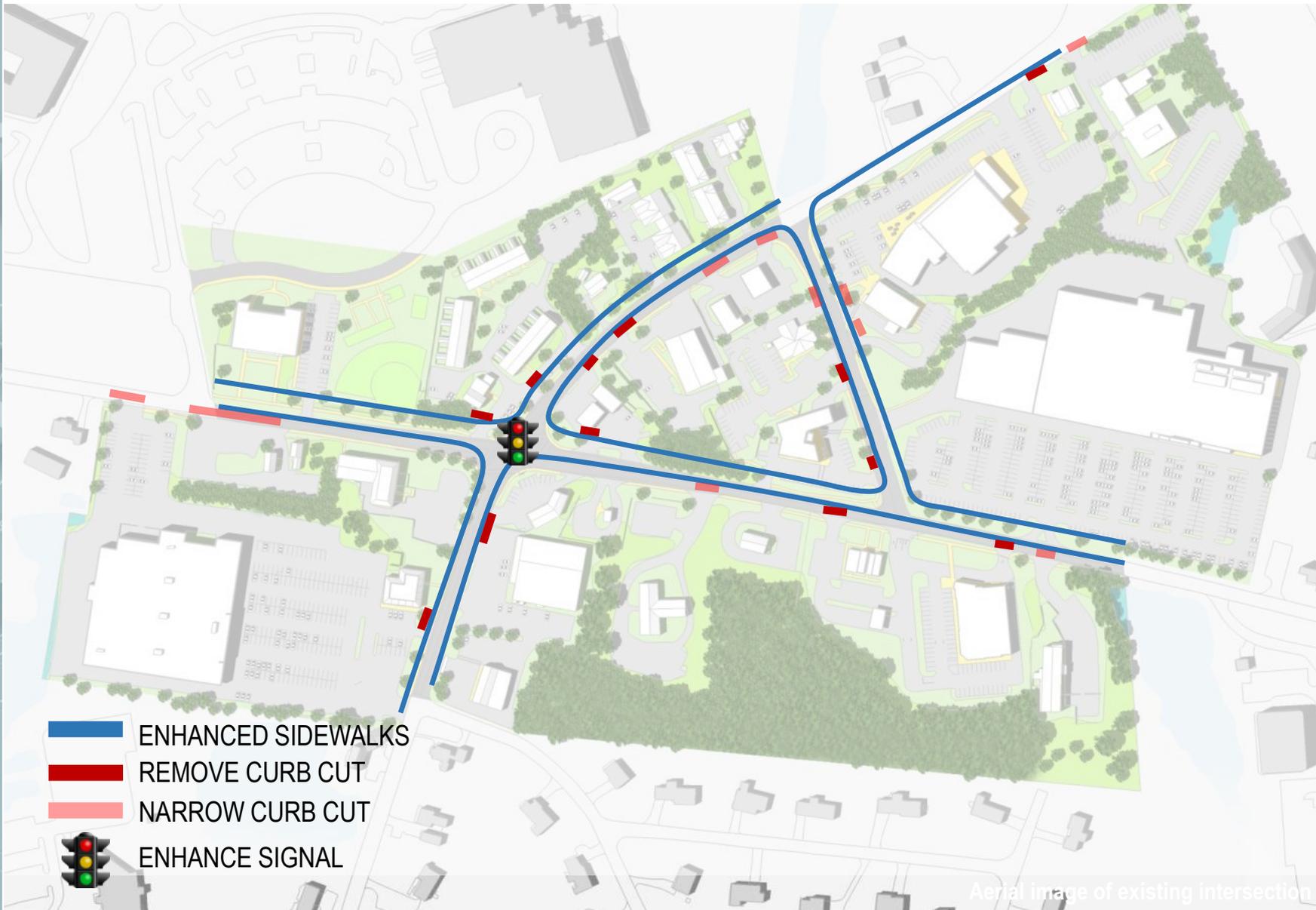
Targeted  
Improvements

Balanced  
Network

Expanded  
Network

- Make signal timing improvements, but do not significantly reconfigure the intersections or approaches along Massachusetts Avenue or Main Street
- Improve existing crosswalks
- Provide sidewalks throughout Kelley's Corner
- Implement access management principals to reduce/eliminate curb cuts and make traffic more predictable
- Continue incremental project-based improvements to correct deficiencies
- Accept Community Lane as a public way, provide improvements including extending sidewalks on both sides

# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: Targeted Improvements



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: Targeted Improvements

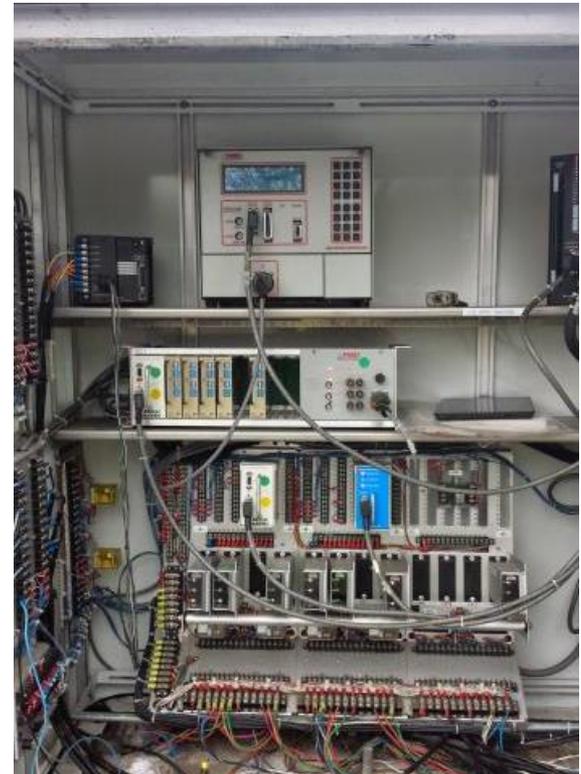
## Upgrade Signal Intelligence

Multiple Time-of-Day Plans developed according to specific driving patterns during the following periods:

- Morning commute
- Afternoon school release
- Evening commute
- Weekends
- Off-peak

## Signal Equipment

- Ornamental equipment
- Visibility: install backplates and retro-reflective border



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: Targeted Improvements

## Pedestrian Signals

- MUTCD and PROWAG compliant
- Eliminate Walk/Don't Walk
- Implement Walking Person/Upraised Hand
- Countdown Indication
- Lengthen Crossing Phase to meet current standards (18 seconds to 28 seconds)



## ADA Compliance and Visibility

- Compliant Wheelchair Ramps & Sidewalks
- Eliminate Obstructions to Pathway
- Tactile Warning Strips - MassDOT
- Remove APEX Ramps - MassDOT
- Concrete Sidewalks
- Audio-Tactile Pedestrian Equipment



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: Targeted Improvements

## Design Concept



## Circulation and Roadways Alternatives

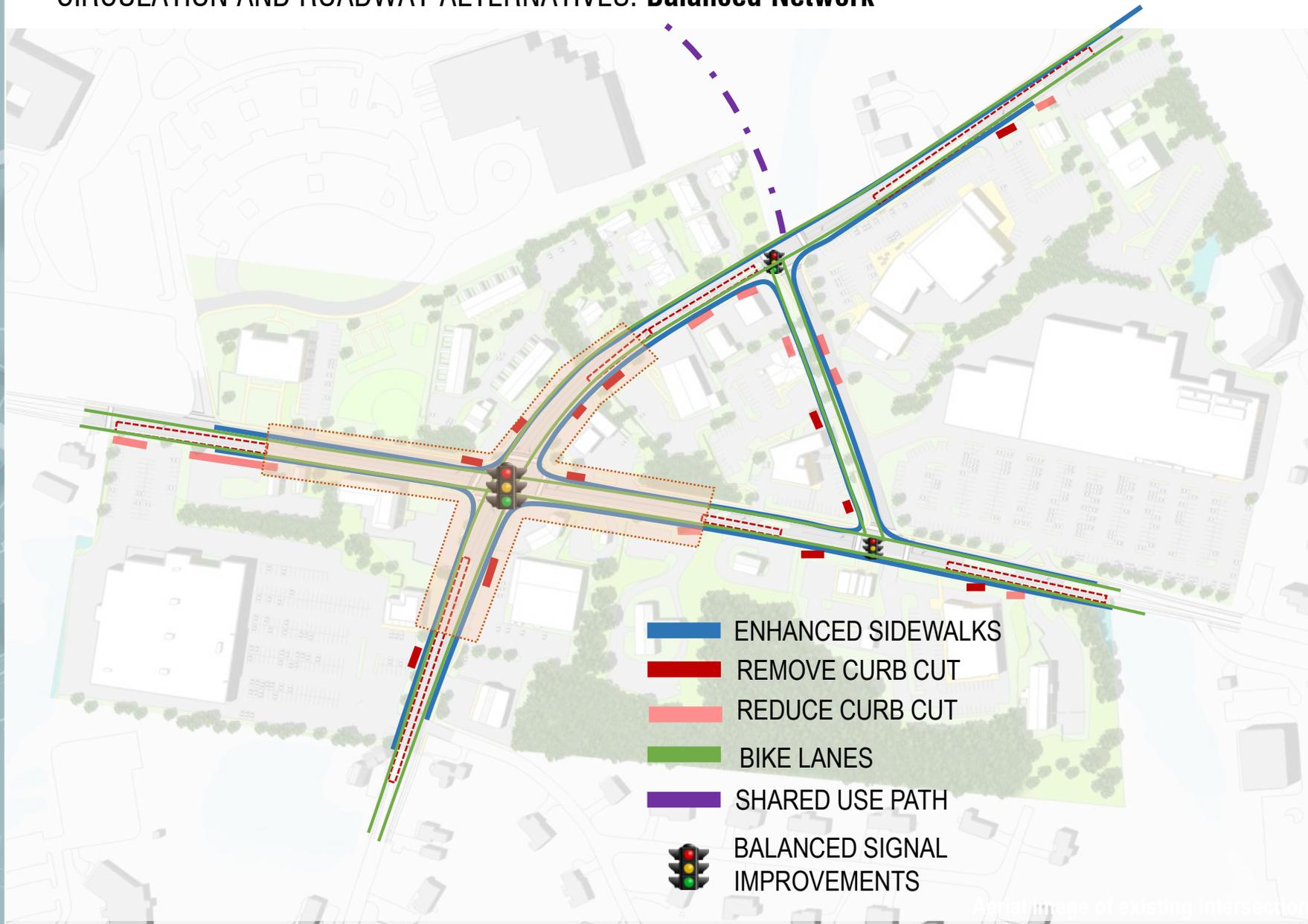
Targeted  
Improvements

Balanced  
Network

Expanded  
Network

- Incorporate left turn pockets to reduce congestion
- Add and improve crosswalks
- Add bicycle lanes and complete sidewalks on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street
- Implement access management principals to reduce/eliminate curb cuts and make traffic more predictable
- Accept Community Lane as a public way, provide improvements including sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides, and signalize the intersections with Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street

# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: **Balanced Network**



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: **Balanced Network**

## **Design Concept**



## Circulation and Roadways Alternatives

Targeted  
Improvements

Balanced  
Network

Expanded  
Network

- Create internal streets to facilitate private redevelopment
- Design new roadways and internal connections to enhance mobility and access for all users
- Provide an alternate connection to and from the school access road and Main Street south
- Implement with design and zoning standards for private development

# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: **Expanded Network**

NEW INTERIOR "STREETS"  
NEW INTERIOR PATHS



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES: **Expanded Network**

## Design Concept



# CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY ALTERNATIVES

## Summary

### Targeted Improvements

- Technology improvements to improve signalization
- Complete all sidewalks (both sides), improve crosswalks
- Focus on access management to control curb cuts
- Add Community Lane to town street network

Limited improvements may be accomplished with limited new State standards

### Balanced Network

- Add turning areas to diminish congestion, along with access management
- Improve lanes and signals at Main and Massachusetts
- Complete all sidewalks (both sides), improve crosswalks and add bike lanes
- Add Community Lane

Network improvements will trigger significant State standards including pedestrian, bicycle improvements

### Expanded Network

- Create shared interior streets for all modes of transportation with large new development
- Provide for pedestrian-friendly, secondary network of streets, sidewalks and additional bike routes

Would be accomplished by the private sector according to Town standards

# Acton Town Center Planning

## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

### *Part 3: Landscape and Streetscape Alternatives*

# Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives

Civic  
Character

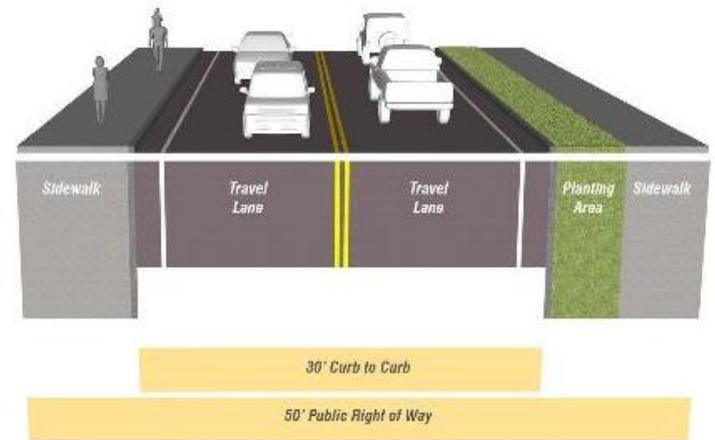
Informal  
Character



# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES

## Streetscape and Landscape Design Context

- a. It should be easier for residents and patrons to access Kelley's Corner
- b. The entire area should be more attractive and safe for walking and biking



# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES

## Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives

Civic  
Character

Informal  
Character

- Consistent patterns of street trees, lighting, paving and furniture to provide a unifying character
- Sidewalks and paving typically extend to curb
- Traditional design characteristics related to Town features, formal street furniture



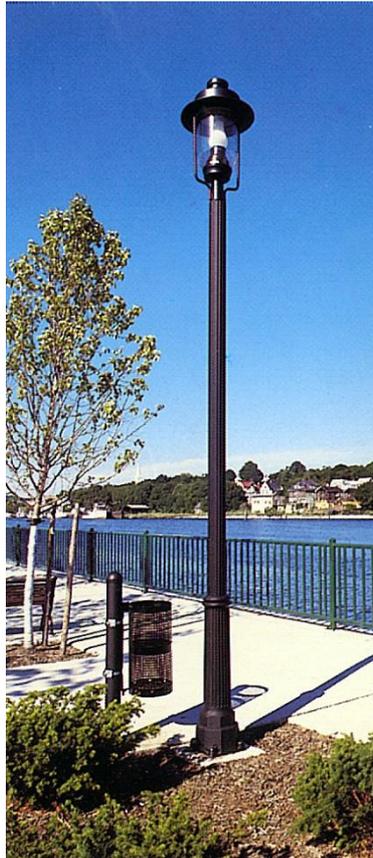
## STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Civic Character



- Consistent palette of repetitive elements
- Sidewalk comes to road edge
- Use of materials and street furniture with a traditional design vocabulary to define character

# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Civic Character

## Civic Character: Representative Elements



# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Civic Character

## Civic Character: Representative Examples



# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES

## Character Alternatives

Civic  
Character

Informal  
Character

- Varied patterns of street trees, paving and furniture to provide a picturesque character
- Sidewalks and paving typically held back from curb, and may meander
- Design characteristics related to the landscape features in the Town,
- Lighting fixtures chosen for compatibility with a more park-like quality, may be contemporary



## STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Informal Character



- Varied landscape including a vegetated buffer between road and sidewalk in many locations
- Fixtures, furniture and enhancements designed to reflect the landscape environment

# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Informal Character

## Informal Character: Representative Elements



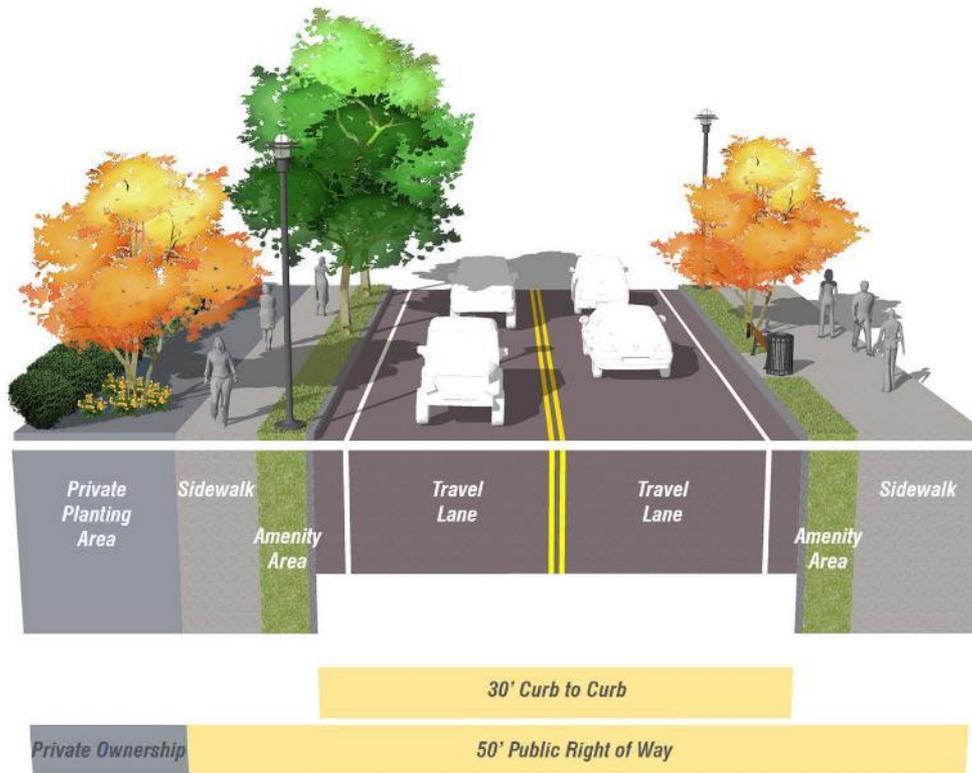
# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Informal Character

## Informal Character: Representative Examples



## STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Relationship to Street and Roadway Design

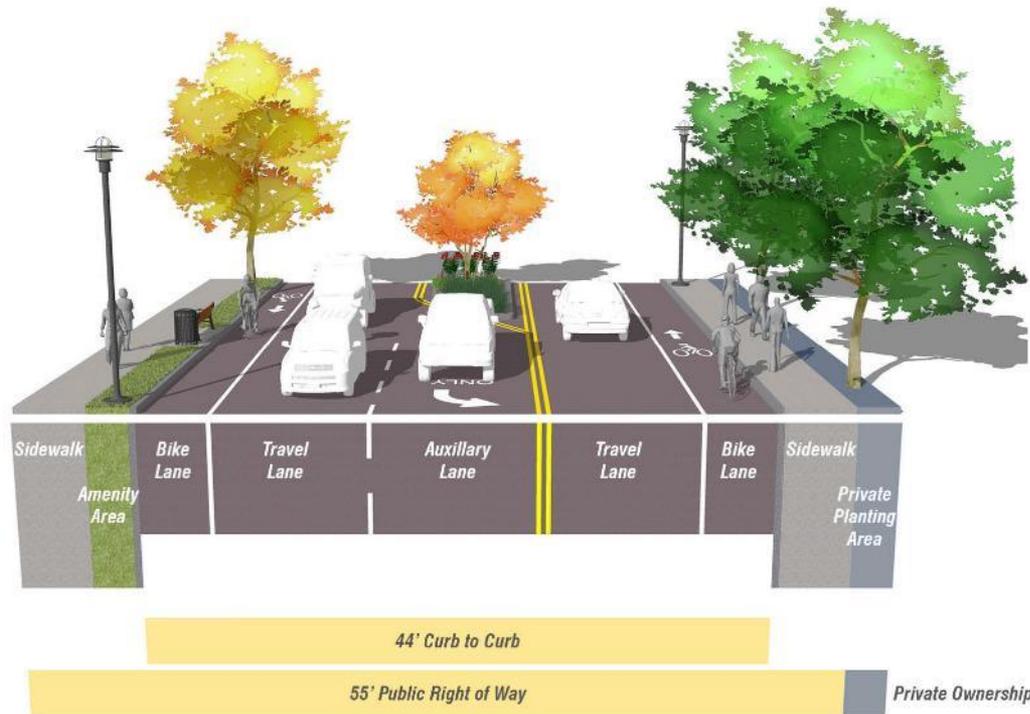
- Either a **Civic** or **Informal** character may be applied to enhanced street cross sections associated with the **Targeted Improvements Alternative** for Circulation and Roadways



- Improvements could be accomplished with the existing public right-of-way
- Sidewalk could be detached from roadway with vegetated buffer within the right-of-way
- Private landscape improvements could complement the public landscape

## STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Relationship to Street and Roadway Design

- Either a **Civic** or **Informal character** may be applied to enhanced street cross sections associated with the **Balanced Network Alternative** for Circulation and Roadways



- In some locations, access easements or acquisition may be required to provide for appropriate sidewalks and/or landscaping on both sides of the road
- Sidewalk can be separated with vegetated buffer, or the sidewalk could be along the curb
- Private landscape improvements could complement the public landscape

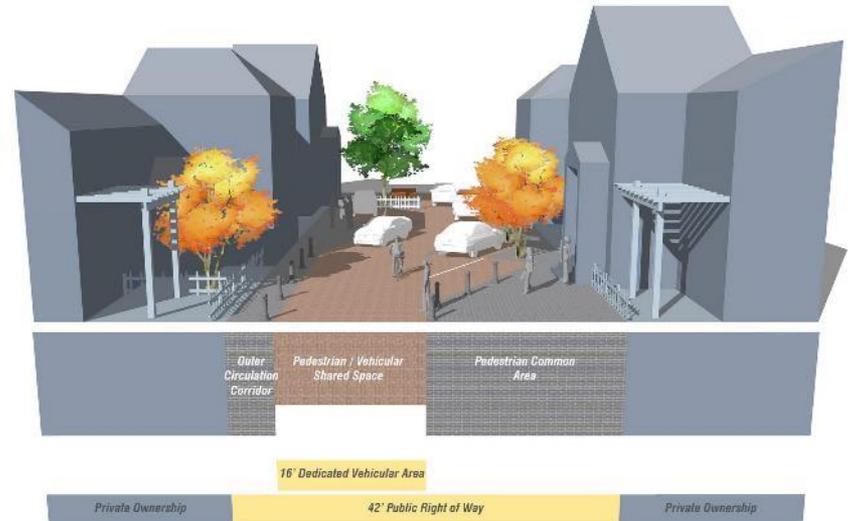
# STREETSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES: Relationship to Street and Roadway Design

- Either a **Civic** or **Informal** character may be applied to enhanced street cross sections associated with the **Expanded Network Alternative** for Circulation and Roadways



- Consistent streetscape similar to the public streets

Civic Character



- Meandering, highly varied paths, spaces and walkways within private development

Informal Character

# STREETCAPE AND LANDSCAPE ALTERNATIVES

## Summary

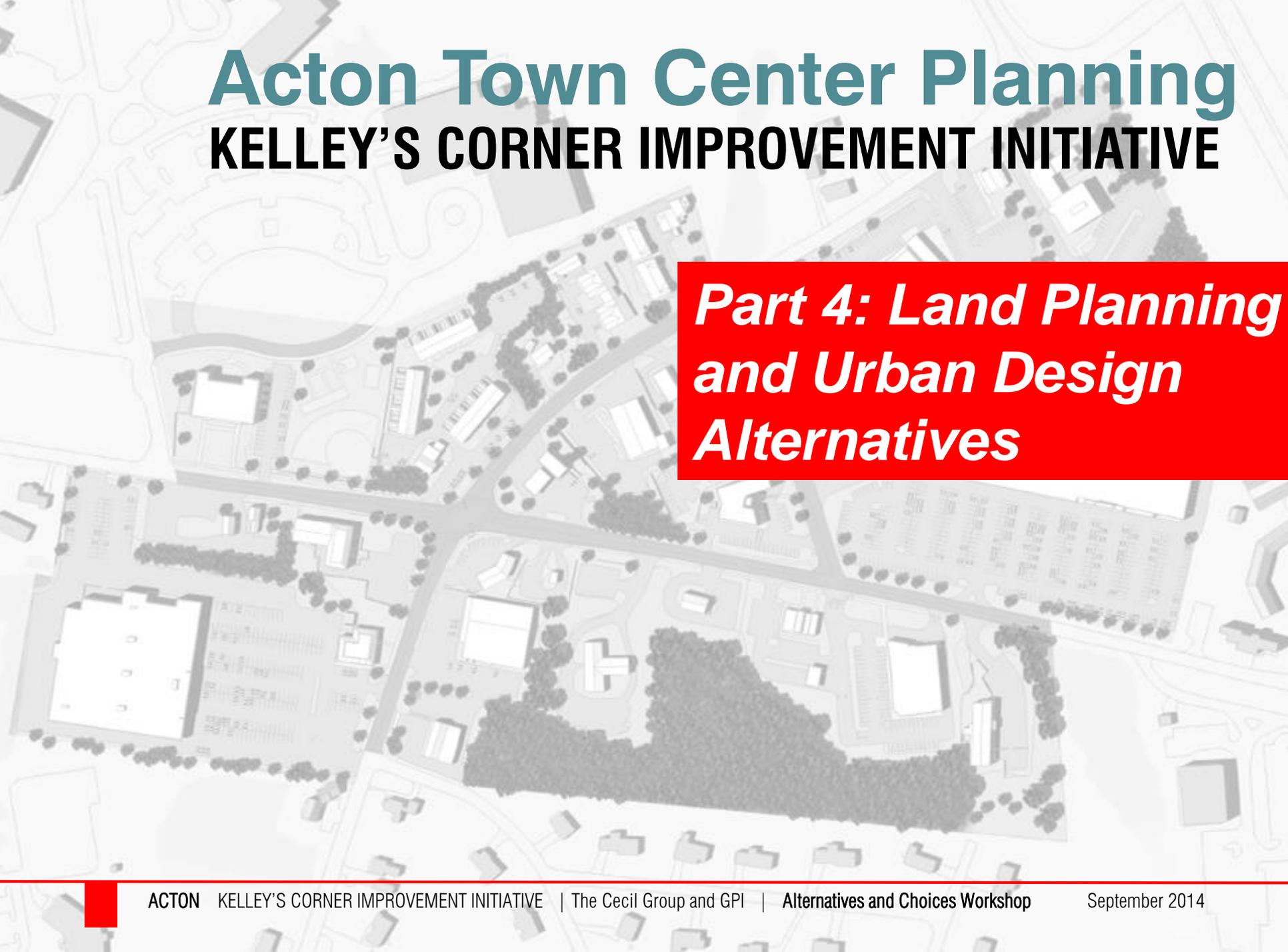
### Civic Character

- Consistent patterns to provide a unifying character
- Sidewalks and paving typically extend to curb
- Traditional design characteristics

### Informal Character

- Varied patterns to provide a picturesque character
- Sidewalks and paving typically held back from curb, and may meander
- Design characteristics related to landscape features in Town
- More park-like quality





# Acton Town Center Planning

## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

### *Part 4: Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives*

# Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives

Enhanced  
Townscape

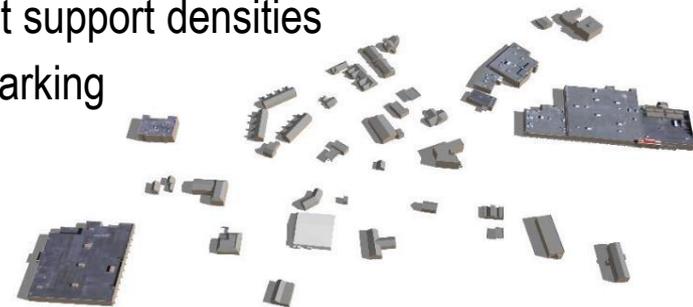
Commercial and  
Retail Center

Planned Mixed  
Use



## Market Potential, Density and Mix of Uses

- Redevelopment and new investment is desirable
- Most sites are not likely to significantly change in the short to mid-term
- Significant change can be anticipated on a few large sites and areas over the long term, and could be managed with Town regulatory standards
- Incremental changes may be anticipated at any time, and could be better regulated
- Market demand exists within the scale of available sites and space for a mix of retail, commercial, and housing uses
- Market conditions and real estate economics will not support densities dependent upon significant amounts of structured parking



Existing Buildings in Kelley's Corner

## Opportunities and Constraints for Development

- Redevelopment must respond to market opportunities
- Reinvestment will occur when the benefit of redevelopment exceeds the risks and costs for sites
- Renovations or additions may be practical for some locations
- Zoning constraints are primarily associated with the limits on the uses that can occur, such as housing in some areas of Kelley's Corner



### Existing Improvements, Lot Coverage and Land Efficiency

- Many of the sites in Kelley's Corner are practically "built out" in terms of lot coverage by buildings, parking, according to today's zoning standards and portions of site that are difficult to use because of slopes, landscaping or the proportions of the parcel.
- However, some sites are available today, and over the longer term some of the larger sites are likely to be reorganized and improved.



## Enhanced Townscape Alternative

Enhanced  
Townscape

Commercial and  
Retail Center

Planned Mixed  
Use

- Provide for additions and incremental new development that fills in spaces to create interest and economic activity and enhances the appearance of the area
- No significant changes in the allowable uses
- Provide for shared parking, access and other improvements to improve efficiency of land use

## Enhanced Townscape Alternative

- Encourage renovations and reinvestment by allowing flexible approach to providing parking, sharing access.
- Allow non-conforming sites and uses to expand if they provide a better design solutions and added value to the area.
- Set standards for single site development of “infill” projects.
- Encourage redevelopment of front or unused back areas of existing parcels with complementary uses, sharing parking.

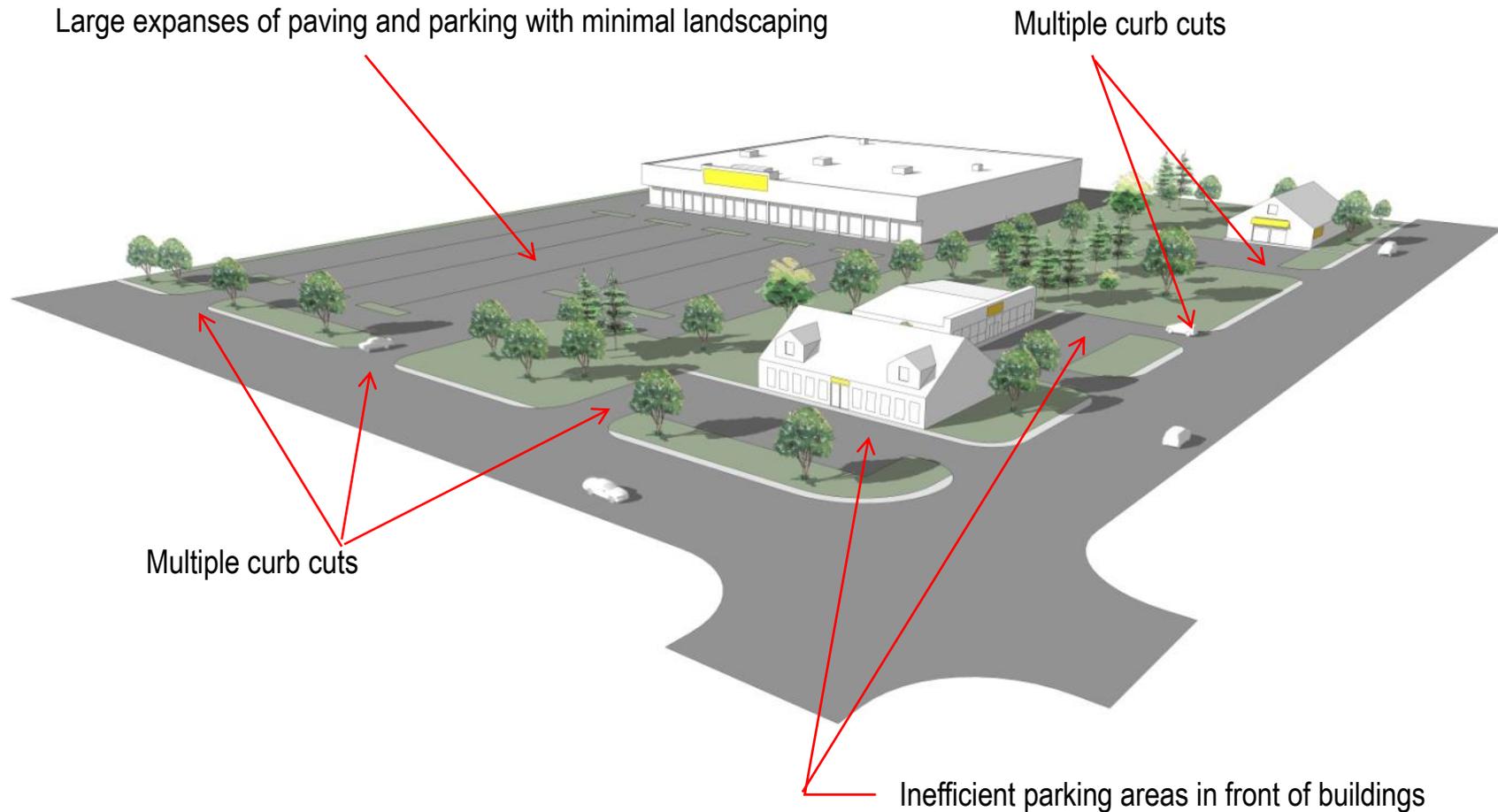


## Enhanced Townscape Alternative: Design Principles

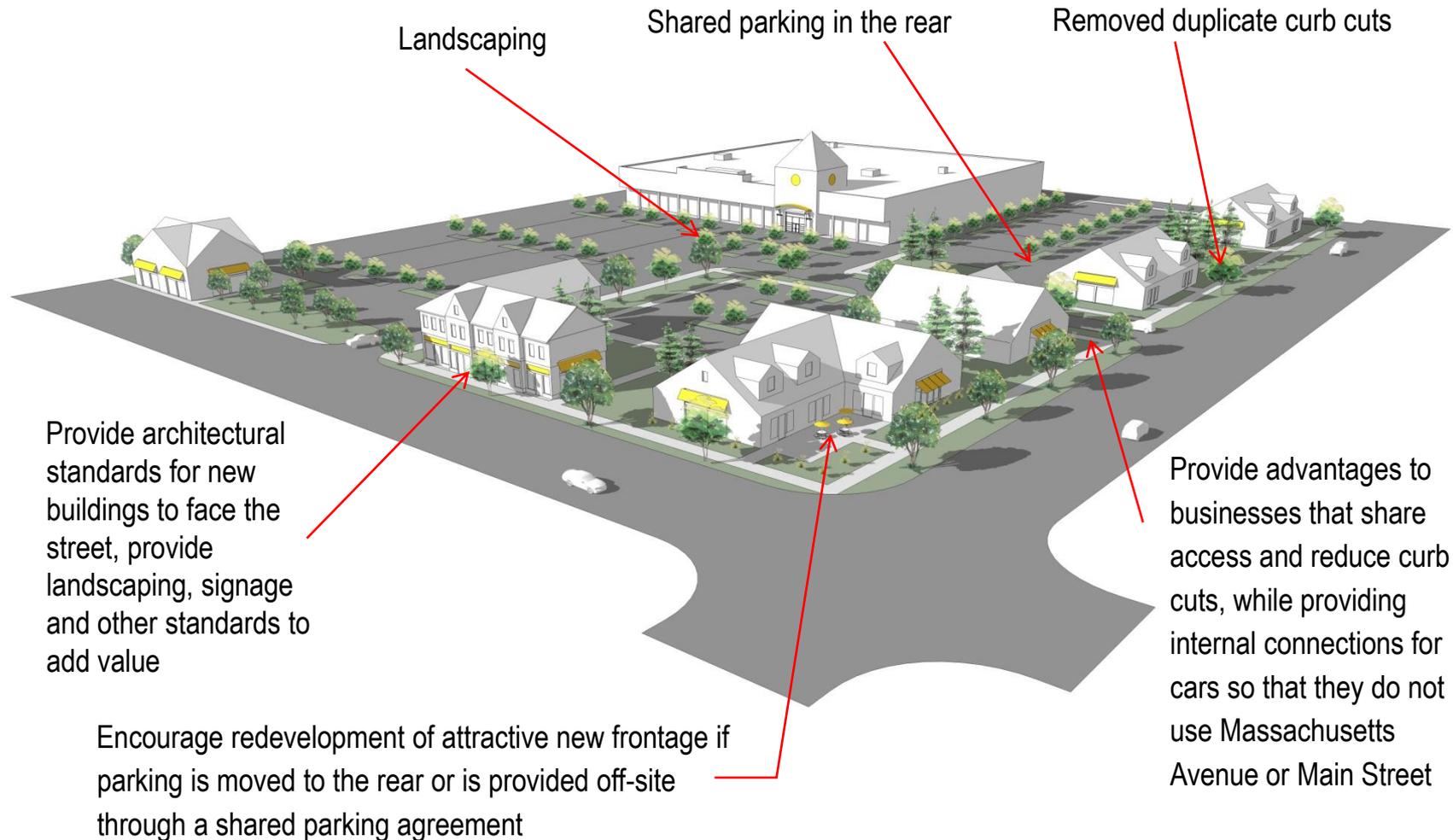
- Require buildings to have a principle orientation towards the street
- Provide parking along the sides and behind buildings relative to the street
- Set standards for landscaping, signage, architectural character and other important contributors to the quality and value of the area
- Encourage multiple buildings on lots if they are appropriately located and share parking



## Existing Design and Development Patterns

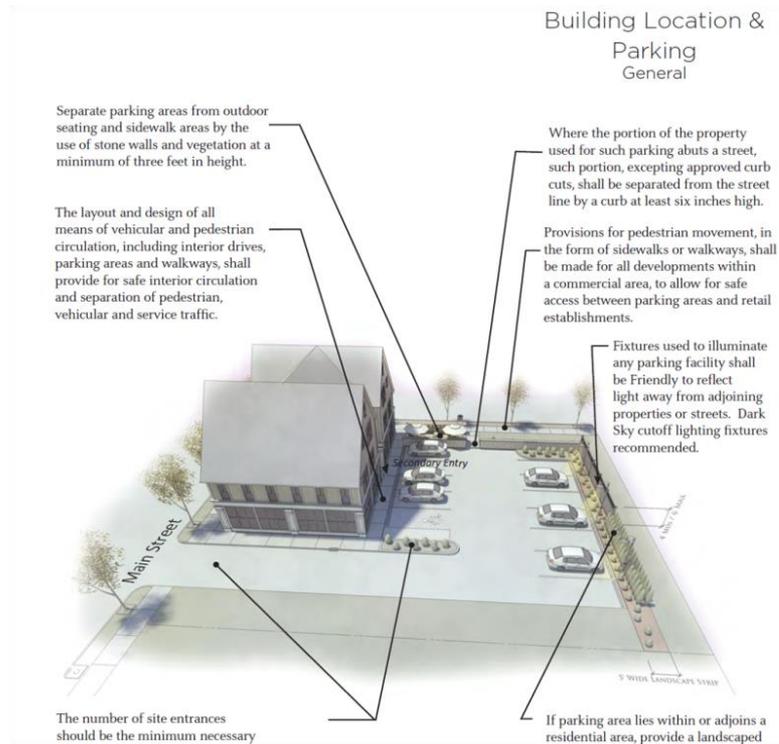


## Enhanced Townscape Alternative



# LAND PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

## Enhanced Townscape Alternative: Precedents and Examples



Form-Based Code for Tiverton, RI  
(The Cecil Group and Union Studio)

Kelley's Corner TD Bank

## Commercial and Retail Center Alternative

Enhanced  
Townscape

Commercial and  
Retail Center

Planned Mixed  
Use

- Provide for enhanced new development of commercial and retail uses as “infill”
- Employ site and design standards to better organize projects on larger sites and better design
- Provide for shared parking, access and other improvements to improve efficiency of land use

## Commercial and Retail Center Alternative

- Promote commercial and retail redevelopment by encouraging multiple buildings on single sites with shared parking
- Require off-street connections to adjacent parcels to the extent practical
- Provide for planned development of large sites with additional site planning and design standards to create internal circulation, access and effective open space, while promoting attractive appearance that addresses the existing street system
- Set zoning and design standards to limit the impacts on adjacent residential properties



### **Commercial and Retail Center Alternative: Potential Coordinated Development Sites**

- Sites and properties that could most benefit from a coordinated development plan with improved access, planned development, and shared use of parking and other improvements over the long term

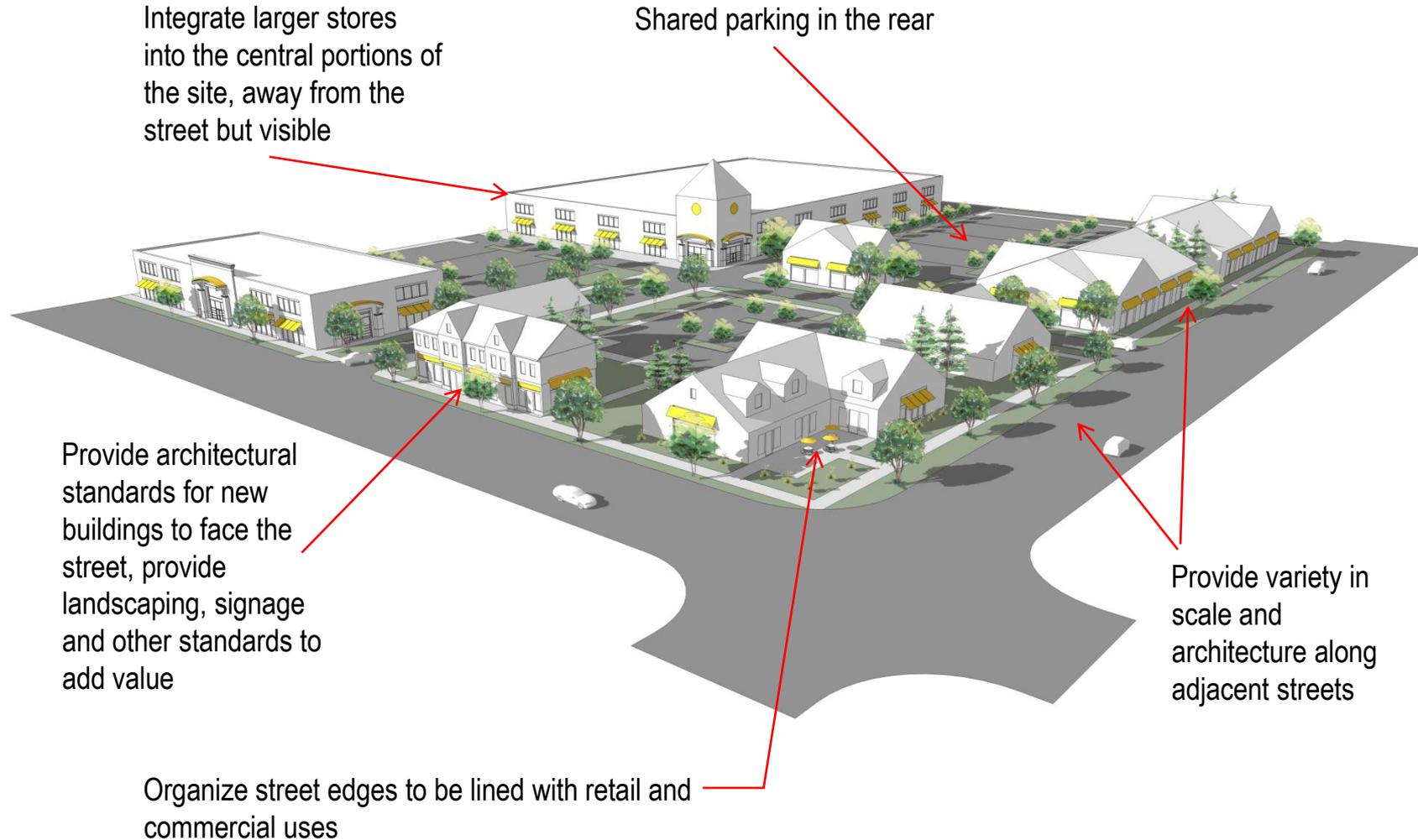


## Commercial and Retail Center Alternative

- Focus redevelopment on commercial uses and retail establishments
- Require buildings to have a principle orientation towards the existing street
- Provide parking along the sides and behind buildings relative to the street
- Set standards for landscaping, signage, architectural character and other important contributors to the quality and value of the area



## Commercial and Retail Center Alternative



# LAND PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

## Commercial and Retail Center Alternative: Precedents and Examples

Wellesley Linden Hills



Photos: Google Earth

# LAND PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

## Commercial and Retail Center Alternative: Precedents and Examples

### Hingham Shipyard Redevelopment



Photos: Google Earth

## Planned Mix Use Alternative

Enhanced  
Townscape

Commercial and  
Retail Center

Planned Mixed  
Use

- Provide for a broader mix of uses that includes housing to create a more vital area and incentivize redevelopment
- Require planned development for large sites that accomplishes key public goals and design quality
- Provide for shared parking and shared access

## Planned Mixed Use Alternative

- Expand the range of uses to include housing throughout Kelley's corner, to provide vitality, incentivize redevelopment, and increase value.
- Require off-street connections to adjacent parcels to the extent practical
- Provide for planned development of large sites with additional site planning and design standards for internal circulation, access to and effective open space, while promoting attractive appearance
- Set zoning and design standards to limit the impacts on adjacent residential properties

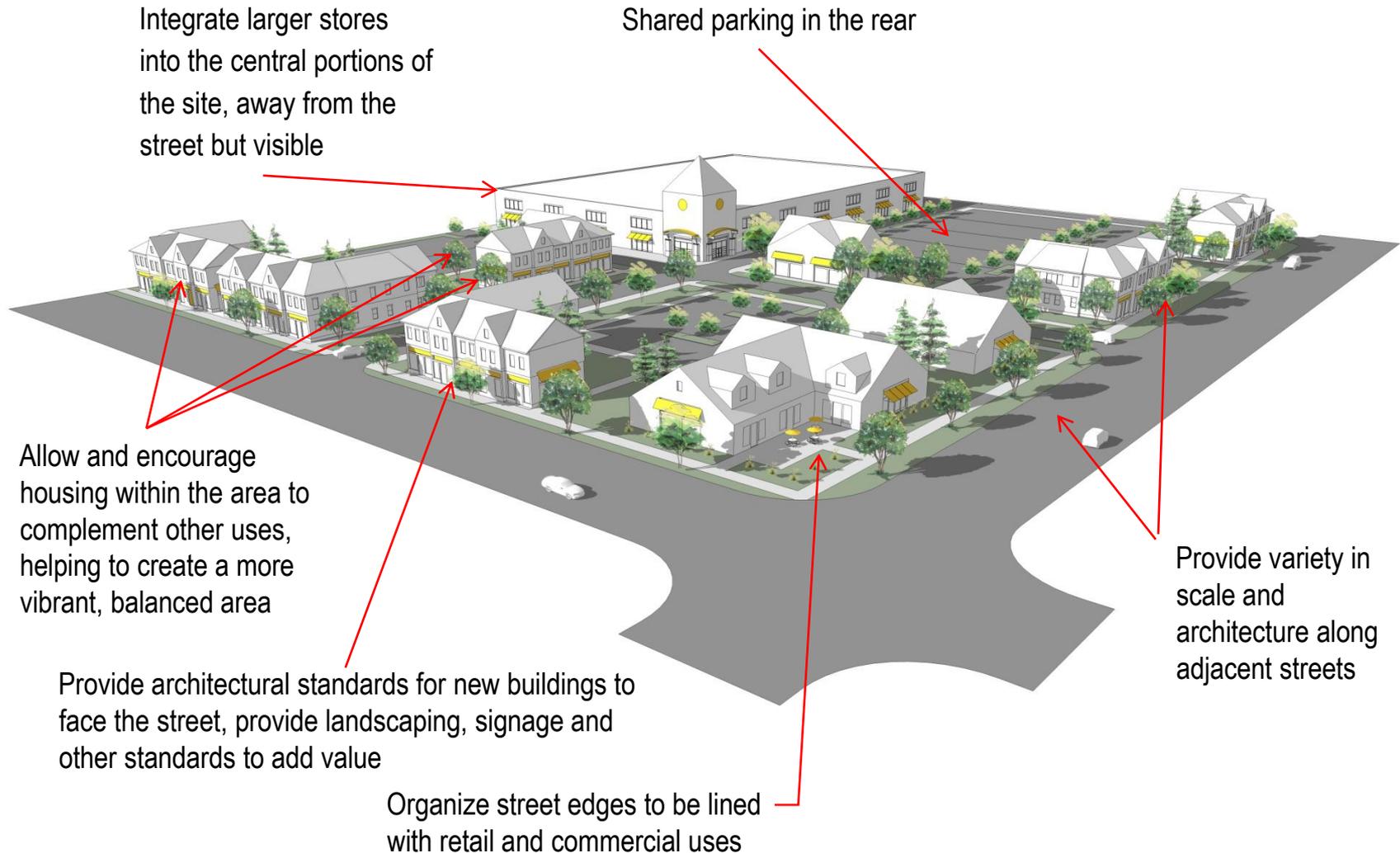


## Planned Mixed Use Alternative: Design Concepts

- Require buildings to have a principle orientation towards the street
- Provide parking along the sides and behind buildings relative to the street
- Set standards for landscaping, signage, architectural character and other important contributors to the quality and value of the area
- Encourage multiple buildings on lots if they are appropriately located and share parking
- Keep the scale of housing consistent with the character of the area, up to 3 stories.



## Planned Mixed Use Alternative: Design Concepts



## Planned Mix Use Alternative: Precedents and Examples

### Wayland Town Center



Wayland Town Center,  
Arrowstreet Architects

# LAND PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

## Planned Mix Use Alternative: Precedents and Examples

### Wayland Town Center

Wayland Town Center,  
Arrowstreet Architects, Allevato  
Architects, Others



## Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives Summary

### Enhanced Townscape

- Allow incremental development that fulfills certain design principles
- Make no significant changes in the allowable uses
- Provide for shared parking, access and other improvements to improve efficiency of land use
- No additional provisions or incentives added for coordinated development

### Commercial and Retail Center

- Provide for enhanced new development of commercial and retail uses as “infill”
- Employ site and design standards to better organize projects on larger sites and better design
- Provide for shared parking and access
- Reinvestment may be limited by a narrower range of allowable uses

### Planned Mixed Use

- Provide for a broader mix of uses that includes housing
- Require planned development for large sites that accomplishes key public goals and design quality
- Provide for shared parking, and access
- Would increase financial incentive for redevelopment with broader range of uses

# Acton Town Center Planning

## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

### *Part 5: Observations and Meeting Summary*

## CHOICES

### **Metrics for Infrastructure Alternatives**

- Maintaining traffic flow
- Increased road safety
- Improving walking and biking
- Cost Factors
- MassDOT compliance

### **Metrics for Streetscape Alternatives**

- Providing a character of place
- Comfort and safety of pedestrians
- Visibility for businesses
- Cost factors
- MassDOT Compliance

### **Metrics for Land Planning and Urban Design**

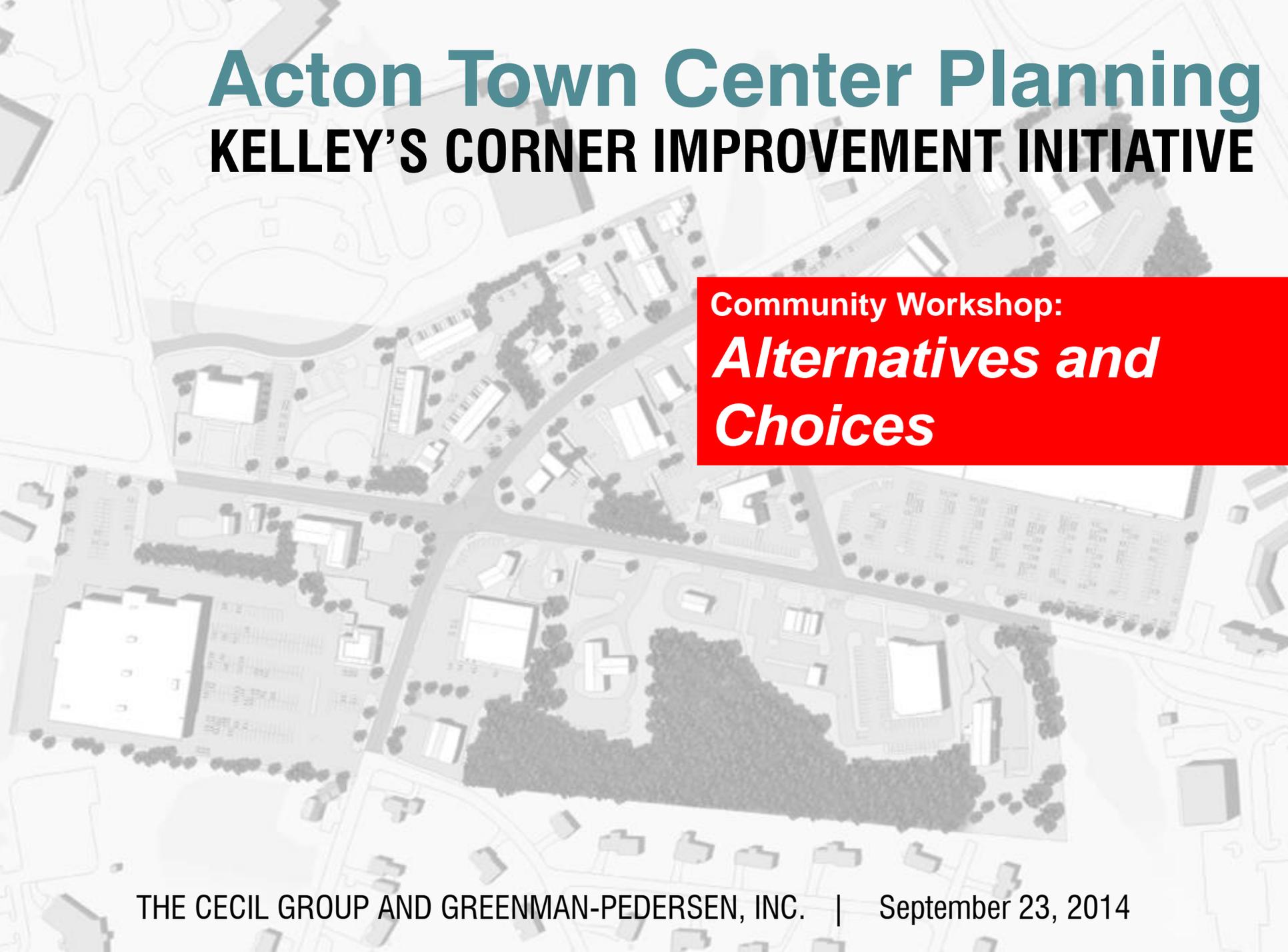
- Character of development and street presence
- Development feasibility
- Tools for local regulation

## **Next Steps**

- **Additional Public Input**
- **Committee Recommendations**
- **Report on Preferred Approach**

### ***Public presentation and discussions***

- **Concept Layouts and Designs**
- **Funding**
- **Zoning**



# Acton Town Center Planning

## KELLEY'S CORNER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

Community Workshop:

*Alternatives and  
Choices*