

**MEMORANDUM**

Date: October 2, 2013

To: Kelley's Corner Steering Committee , Town of Acton

From: Ken Buckland, The Cecil Group  
Steve Cecil, The Cecil Group  
Nels Nelson, The Cecil Group

RE: Alternatives and Choices Workshop Results

Copies: Jason DeGray, GPI

**Summary of Alternatives and Choices Workshop**

The Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative Alternatives and Choices Workshop was held on September 16, 2014. Over 50 residents were present and participated in the discussions on the future of Kelley's Corner (KC). The relevant presentation can be found here: <http://tiny.cc/kelleyscorner-sept-16>

The participants provided input on the consultant team's alternatives for three aspects: Circulation and Roadways, Streetscape and Landscape, and Land Planning and Urban Design.

**Reactions to Each Section**

**Circulation and Roadways Alternatives**

The participants were provided with three alternatives: Targeted Improvements, Balanced Network, and Expanded Network. The majority of the workshop participants were impressed by GPI's rationale for the more extensive improvements in the Balanced Network. However, there were some concerns about particular aspects in the alternative, including cost, land taking, and the number of new traffic signals. In general, there was enthusiasm for the Expanded Network. It is a non-exclusive option, and as such, was not discussed in as much detail as the definite choice between Targeted Improvements and Balanced Network.

### *Targeted Improvements*

<b>Merit</b>	<b>Concern</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents support reduction of curb cuts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not address the significant traffic problems in KC</li> <li>Fear of increasing density and increased traffic</li> <li>Despite minor changes, no overall benefit has occurred in decades</li> </ul>

### *Balanced Network*

<b>Merit</b>	<b>Concern</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solution to traffic problem</li> <li>The left turn pockets throughout are very needed</li> <li>Left turns off of Main Street are needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional impacts, including property acquisition (takings) and business downtime due to construction</li> <li>Two sets of new lights may not be needed or warranted</li> <li>What will become of parking at the law office and Bueno Y Sano</li> <li>Widened roadway could result in higher traffic speed</li> </ul>

### *Expanded Network*

<b>Merit</b>	<b>Concern</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separated bike lane is a plus</li> <li>Ability to avoid traffic lights</li> <li>Secondary pathways are very desirable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No concerns were voiced</li> </ul>

### Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives

The participants were given two alternatives in this section; Informal Character and Civic Character. General support was towards the Informal Character with aspects of the Civic Character woven together. The most discussed hybrid approach is for the streetscape to become more formal towards the intersection. Another theme was the desire for congregation or feature areas with pockets for seating and other public uses. Residents also liked the idea of recognizable crosswalks that would identify KC and make it more pedestrian friendly. Participants were concerned about snow removal and maintenance cost differences between the two alternatives.

### *Civic Character*

<b>Merit</b>	<b>Concern</b>
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Merit	Concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could also be designed to have green bulb-outs</li> <li>• Like the brick trim</li> <li>• Better “sense of place”</li> <li>• Formalization at the major intersection is desirable</li> <li>• The benches are positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without street parking on the main roads, there would be very little buffer</li> <li>• Sidewalks at the edge of the road encourage jaywalking</li> <li>• Different than the existing condition in KC</li> <li>• No significant buffer between fast-moving traffic and pedestrians</li> </ul>

*Informal Character*

Merit	Concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water control and snow storage</li> <li>• In keeping with existing character and landscape of KC</li> <li>• Builds off the current character and conditions as found in KC</li> <li>• More “green feel”, less pavement</li> <li>• Allows for more variation in design</li> <li>• Introduces a buffer between pedestrians and traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Want only native species</li> <li>• The maintenance of the planting strip</li> </ul>

Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives

The participants were given three alternatives in this section; Enhanced Townscape, Commercial and Retail Center, and Planned Mixed Use. The majority of the workshop’s participants were in favor of at least some residential mix in the development of KC.

*Enhanced Townscape*

This alternative was not a topic of discussion in the breakout groups. As a baseline approach, it is assumed to have predictable results.

*Commercial and Retail Center*

This alternative was considered an improvement over the Enhanced Townscape approach due to the residents’ strong desire for large-scale redevelopment on the large commercial properties, most notably Kmart. However, the breakout group discussions were focused on the mix of housing and commercial uses, where commercial uses are desirable without concern.

*Planned Mixed Use*

The majority of residents expressed an interest in having residential uses in KC, though only with a number of conditions for allowing the developments.



Merit	Concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential uses would be a benefit to KC as an addition to commercial uses, but not as a replacement</li> <li>• Attract empty nesters</li> <li>• Up-to-date, upscale condominiums are needed in the area, for example, the project in West Acton</li> <li>• It is an attractive location for multi-family development</li> <li>• Need housing for aging people in Acton, should be either single-level or equipped with elevators</li> <li>• Mixed-use is better because it reduces dependency on cars for that area</li> <li>• Would bring in more activities, services, and quality restaurants to the area</li> <li>• Would capitalize on sewer improvements</li> <li>• Mixing use horizontally as well as vertically could be a good fit for KC</li> <li>• Could ask developers for community amenities, such as a senior center or town pool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not preclude commercial development with housing by turning the entire area into housing development or by developing housing first (with the presumption that the new residents would not want to be surrounded by construction)</li> <li>• More families could be an issue with the school system, but need to compare against enrollment forecast</li> <li>• Tax revenue balance with multi-family</li> <li>• Differing opinions on height restriction from different residents, where some residents want to keep existing limit (36’) and others want it to be raised (to 45’)</li> <li>• Need investigation into the traffic impacts of mixed use development</li> </ul>

**Preferences among the Alternatives**

In summary, the public responses were directing the concepts as follows:

- Circulation and Roadways Alternatives: Public feedback was in support for the **Balanced Network** alternative on the basis that it would take needed steps to solve the existing traffic problem in KC. However concerns were expressed about particular details of the plan, as described in the **Reactions** section.
- Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives: The residents were in favor of the **Informal Landscape** for the possibility of integration with the existing KC feeling and development, though a hybrid with the **Civic Landscape** was recommended for certain locations, especially around the main intersection.
- Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives: The opportunity for **Planned Mixed Use** was well-received by the participants who see the added value of a



component of residential uses in KC, although specific concerns were raised regarding when and how the residential development would occur, as described in the **Reactions** section.

### **Recommended Preferred Alternative**

Based on these outcomes of the workshop, The Cecil Group team recommends the following direction for the development of the draft design and zoning concepts:

- **Balanced Network:** Use the Balanced Network alternative while taking every effort to reduce the amount of takings required. Use land use regulations to create an Expanded Network condition in future development. Take immediate steps to begin developing an Expanded Network by establishing a permanent non-motorized pathway to the schools.
- **Informal/Civic Landscape:** Use the Informal Landscape design vocabulary along major stretches of Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street to reinforce the existing landscape and maintain a landscaped safety buffer for pedestrians. Where appropriate, such as around the main intersection, weave in elements of the Civic Landscape (see below).
- **Planned Mixed Use:** Plan for a component of residential uses in KC along with stringent conditions for prospective developers to ensure that the development occurs in-line with Acton's goals and principles.

