

**MEMORANDUM**

Date: November 19, 2014

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: Online Survey on Alternatives and Choices Results

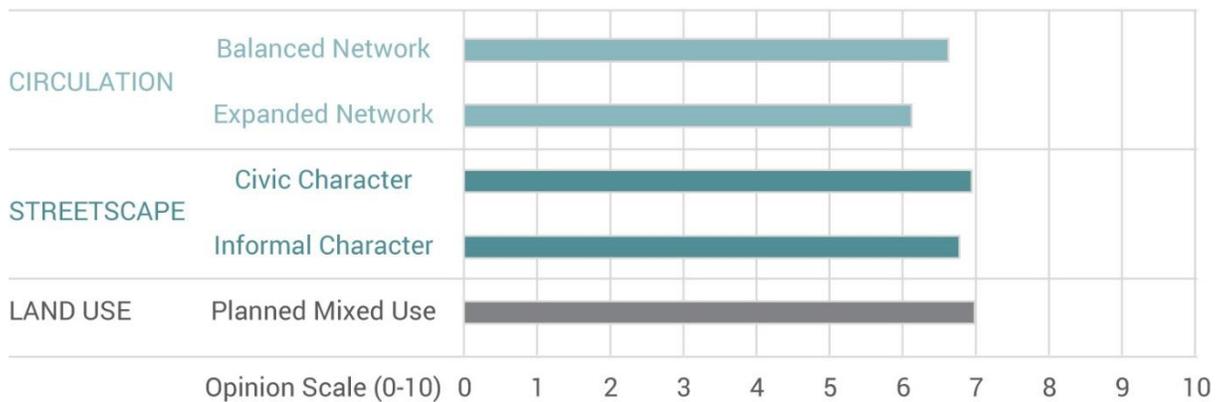
Copies: Jason DeGray, GPI

**Online Survey**

From late October 5 until November 17, 2014, Acton residents used an online survey to rank their opinions and comment upon the preferred alternatives (as selected during the September 16 Public Workshop). The online survey was publicized by Acton 2020. On the survey’s webpage, links were provided to the Public Workshop presentation and the video of the Public Workshop on ActonTV.

The online survey received 72 responses (67 of which chose to self-identify and provide a home address in Acton). According to the Network ID data automatically collected by the survey, there is no evidence of foul play.

*Figure. Average results of opinion scale for each alternative.*



## Circulation Alternatives

### Balanced Network



### Substantial comments

- Yes - finish sidewalks and add turning lane for traffic!
- We really need to encourage walking and bike riding in town. The roads are too narrow now and better lanes and paths would help. Also, it's critical to get left turn lanes in place. This would really alleviate traffic issues.

- Reducing traffic congestion & providing better & safer access should be top priorities. This plan does both.
  - I would like to see a reduction of curb cuts and better linkage internally in the parking areas
  - Need to remove all curb cuts within 500 ft of traffic signals.
  - Need to provide contiguous access behind businesses to their parking, not curb cut access. A frontage road concept would require more land but work better."
  - This sounds like a very good option. It's essential to have more than one lane flowing in each direction.
  - One thing left out here is getting the utility poles, signage and other obstructions off of the sidewalk path. If two strollers, kids on bikes, wheel chairs, and pedestrians cannot pass each other, you have failed.
  - Improving traffic issues is huge. Will make it easier for people to choose to shop in this area.
  - It will turns the area into more of a high speed roadway found near shopping malls. It is too close to the school zone.
  - I'd hate to see more pavement, but am concerned about traffic buildup
  - I especially approve the two additional stoplights--much needed!
  - I like it, generally. The wider roads, bike lanes, improved landscaping, and sidewalks are certain improvements and much needed. I question the addition of 2 stop lights, and wonder if we could get away with adding just one (or neither)?
  - Main Street should not be widened south of Beverly Road.
  - The possibility of improving motor vehicle traffic flow--providing separate left-turn lanes and better signaling--and making the area more bicycle-friendly is very appealing. But I worry that the improved traffic flow might draw more cars, and that with bike lanes competing for space on the road, rather than located somewhere off-road, there will be more car-bike conflicts and collisions. As Jim Snyder-Grant has observed, a bicyclist doesn't want to end up as flat as the bicyclist-silhouette painted in bike lanes.
  - It is important to keep it pedestrian friendly
  - I worry that with additional lanes it will feel less pedestrian friendly. However, I do agree with the added stop lights to help pedestrians get across, especially near the path that students take.
  - I think all measures will improve the traffic situation, however I disagree with the addition of the two traffic signals. Turn lanes, etc will mitigate those areas of concern.
  - Current roads do not meet needs of either cars, bicycles, or pedestrians, & furthermore often make access to businesses a challenge.
  - I think this is overkill. It is not clear that the intersection needs this type of upgrade considering volume has declined. Aesthetically sure this would make the intersection look nicer but is it really necessary.
  - Allowing more traffic to flow freely through this area by allowing left turn lanes, etc., just increases the constant flow of traffic down Main Street. Right now, it is
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incredibly dangerous to try to cross Main Street in Acton Center (i.e., from Newtown Road to Concord Road) with the continuous flow of cars. I only seeing this aggravating the situation. This design is being undertaken with seemingly no consideration for traffic/safety concerns downstream.

- Unfortunately, Acton is largely a car-driven town. Anything to increase safe walking and biking puts us into the 21st century.
- Traffic and pedestrian use are both addressed here and that should be the priority
- Looks hard for pedestrians to cross near where Sorrentos is now. Looks good for buffer between street and sidewalk. I would want more paths, say, behind the stores, not only sidewalks next to the fast traffic. the extra lanes will mean faster traffic. for example, the changes made to Hayward and Main, I am not sure have helped one turn left off Hayward because the widened road means there is not as much stoppage to help the left turners enter Main. Fear widened road at Kelley's would make it faster. I want easy, safe crossings and to create a place pedestrians want to hang out, not just stop by in a car.
- Please note that painted crosswalks, such as the artist renderings depict, are a significant hazard to single track vehicles when conditions are damp/wet and the vehicle is turning. That applies to both motorcycles and bicycles.

### Expanded Network



The image below shows a possible streetscape in an internal street, specifically shared, slow travels lanes and on-street parking.



### Substantial comments

- I like having these interior roads to changes the traffic and pedestrian traffic. Would be much safer for the kids waking from school.

- These exist informally now. I agree that town regulations & planning to support this into the future would be prudent, but the balanced network goals are primary with this as secondary.
  - The private sector will not do it in a timely or coordinated fashion.
  - Seems like a better long term solution. Makes the space look appealing and welcoming
  - This feels like it would improve the walk ability and driving in the community. It preserves the access for residents vs. creating the corner as an option for commuters outside the community.
  - I would love any paths which would enhance walking, biking and even driving. Would love to see creative use alongside major veins.
  - This option, while larger and likely more expensive, is worthwhile in order to bring a more pedestrian-friendly connectivity to the area, rather than a sterile drive and park atmosphere.
  - I like where this is going, but it is far too conceptual in this view.
  - This approach is a more flexible, safer way to serve variety of users and travel-modes.
  - I do not think the pedestrian and bike use of these new ways would justify their expense and disruption to install. The meetings indicate that most people simply drive to the parking lots of where they want to go. Also, the internal foot traffic is not very much. It is easy to do much of this kind of activity.
  - Can these two options be done together? I love the smaller walkways, especially if businesses will indeed develop along them. Less dependence on car in that area is great! Better paths for school children is good too.
  - The internal paths are a good idea. Uncertain what would be gained by the internal streets.
  - I like this better as it provides more options for traffic to move rather than forcing everyone through the single intersection
  - Like the wide sidewalk look and interior paths. I like options...walk this way on the way and that way on the way back. Like idea of apartments on two floors above buildings. Less parking lot-y.
  - This plan is better, but will also require a great deal of work. It does give character to the area and would be a more of a focus to being a walking area.
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## Streetscape Alternatives

### Civic Character



### Substantial comments

- Yes, please finish sidewalks and make area safer for pedestrians
- I can't imagine a "band aid" approach to making Kelley's Corner pedestrian friendly will work. Without a buffer zone between traffic and pedestrians, and with the volume of traffic going through the intersection, it will not be a pleasant place to "stroll around." Who is going to sit on a bench to watch a line of traffic idling at the intersection? And since most people don't live within walking distance, there will be few pedestrians that won't have to drive. So where are all these drivers going to park? Will the strip malls want people taking up spaces to "stroll around" Kelley's Corner rather than shopping and leaving to make room for another customer?
- This option more clearly defines the space as a town center. Given the current diverse mix of buildings & space, the area needs a strong connecting design/concept. It is not a rural area which the informal concept infers.
- Does not integrate the personality of Acton as well as the other solution.
- Very pretty and consistent with the historical background of an old town like Acton.
- It's nice, no objections
- Walking right next to fast moving traffic is uncomfortable. The lack of a parking lane on Main St and Mass Ave make a green strip between the road and sidewalk desirable.
- Consistent features make for a more cohesive environment.
- Kelly's corner isn't the town center or walking district and artificially trying to create it as one through the use of uniform development feels artificial and destined for failure. Who is going to sit on benches there? When and why? It has no theatre, playground, ice cream store or library. It has malls and chain stores.

- Acton very much lacks consistency and charm in many areas. Any attempt to amend this would be super.
  - Kelly corner seems to be more of a car destination vs. a walking destination. Where would you walk to heading north on 27? The area is more of a commercial zone without a lot of residential build up. Would someone walk to the grocery store or department store and carry things home?
  - The mix of elements would create a high end experience and feel. My sense is it would also be less expensive to maintain, but undoubtedly more expensive to install.
  - Better suited for a community or section of a community with a more urban feel, where a more formal style is more appropriate.
  - I think consistency really brings the whole area together
  - Unifying character is not critical. Adding nice features is good, but uniformity can make it look like a corporate office park.
  - Important not to jeopardize aesthetics of lovely & unique Town of Acton. Less attractive, too regimented.
  - Beautification would be nice although doing it in this one location makes the rest of the community intersections want change as well and this gets expensive.
  - I think both options are nice. My vote is for whichever is less expensive to the town and taxpayer as both options would present a huge improvement over today.
  - Fine, but not as good as informal
  - This seems good for the location.
  - If the sidewalks are wide enough, I like the look of the civic character.
  - I like the clean look. I might prefer combining the decorative elements from this style with the more casual landscaping of the informal character
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### Informal Character



### Substantial comments

- This suggests a suburban residential neighborhood - which this area is not. Don't think this supports commercial growth or mixed use design.
- Integrates the character and history of Acton as a unique place better than the other solution.
- Sidewalks must be far from roads to reduce snow plow and run-off problems.
- A wonderful, useful and tasteful approach. Bravo.
- I want walking sidewalks everywhere!
- The improvements that have been discussed here are going to improve the area immeasurably. No one will miss if you move away from the formal layout to something more casual with less expensive materials and installation costs.
- A nice balance of the natural and the manmade--pleasant on the eye, probably better for body and soul.
- Lighting here is a must have safety feature
- Safer and less likely to be affected by snow piles in the winter
- Seems like it would require more land to do this, and may not be worth it
- Much better suited to the neighborhood and Acton's character
- Practical but still beautiful. Best.
- The description of the sidewalks right up to the street scare me this time. Meandering sidewalks, grass berms, variety of routes, mixed use, all appeal.

## Land Use Alternative

### Planned Mixed Use



### Substantial comments

- It's important for the town to gain and maintain "look and feel" control over businesses.
- I agree with this concept in most aspects. Mixed use fits with the town's character and needs. However, I don't understand where the idea of 3 stories comes from...most of the buildings in this area are not 3 stories. Those that are 3-stories are relatively new. I think this design element alone significantly changes the character and outcome of any development in this area. This height expansion may have come in with 40B projects to meet housing percent goals. I would like to see this challenged or at least justified.
- The height of the buildings should be 2 stories, not three. All of the multilevel buildings in the area is a result of 40B development, which bypasses the zoning bylaws voted by town members. The issue of 'structured' parking is a potential show stopper for me.
- More attractive and efficient use of space.
- Having worked in an organization that researched and planned affordable housing, we know that homes in groups should not be oriented towards streets, but towards common areas they share. I would need more information about mixed-use success in order to assess this. Acton needs to avoid excess compact housing that generates little tax but allows great growth in the school-aged population. This is already a problem with so much dense housing, and zoning requirements.

- Buildings oriented toward the street are impractical unless they have two entrances like Subway & Orange Leaf. Also do not think we need more housing in an area that has potential for jobs and increased tax base.
  - Need more restaurants for families in this area. Love the idea of orientation of buildings facing the street with parking behind.
  - Would require leveling of all buildings and starting from scratch. Preferable, not probable. We need, as a Town, to purchase and level the Midas building which currently houses Bueno Y Sano.
  - We must improve on current use of space as it is wasteful and ugly.
  - Anything to reduce the visibility of parking and make it more efficient is a good idea.
  - I agree that the parking in front of Kmart is not desirable, but I hesitate to add more to the density of the area. I agree that fewer curb cuts will help focus the traffic into manageable areas and ultimately make it safer.
  - The ideal, replicating what might have come about serendipitously, organically in other communities that are thriving. Good model to aspire to, even if the transformation is a long time in coming.
  - Important to do it in phases but not to wait too long. We should consider investment to make the changes sooner.
  - The ideas are nice, but need less regulation, not more. A set of guidelines rather than hard regulations work best. This allows the town to attract business with minimal hurdles and then work cooperatively.
  - Mixed use, especially combining residences close to businesses is an inherently bad idea. The reason is that it disturbs the residences too much. One disturbance that I have heard and has been independently reported to me is the loud noises made by trash collection trucks early in the morning. That problem is currently present in KC and in the Gould Shopping Center area on 2A. Ask the residents!
  - I would not add the housing element here. Add housing along secondary access roads behind development (Orange Leaf, Bowladrome developments). Fronting housing on Main Street would take away from the commercial nature of this district - street is too busy & congested - maybe allow housing on second story of commercial buildings.
  - More housing is needed, especially rental
  - Structures close to road make traffic slow down, and allow for interior movement of pedestrians
  - I do like the Planned Mixed use picture except I would want much wider sidewalks on the street side. Allowing for lots of use so we don't just all arrive to the inner lot and those sidewalks are empty.
  - In parking lots, every two car rows should be flanked by a line of trees to provide shade from the hot sun, and the rows should be running north-south for the trees to produce the largest shadows. This will keep the cars from collecting excessive heat, and will reduce gasoline wasted on extra A/C.
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**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.

