

SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC PROCESS

Planning for Kelley's Corner started long before this most recent effort. A review of past studies and projects was helpful to identify what has gone well, what has not, and where new approaches could be helpful to solve old problems.

Kelley's Corner has had a significant history of planning. These studies and planning processes have allowed the Town to collect public opinion at different points and to accumulate technical analyses. The following is a list of these studies and plans.

- 1995 Kelley's Corner Specific Area Plan
- 1997 Kelley's Corner Circulation Plan
- 2010 Re-visioning Kelley's Corner/Open Neighborhood Project
- 2012 Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan
- 2014 Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel

Along with review of previous plans, interviews with people who have been involved, or are still involved, with Kelley's Corner, were used to gain a perspective on what has been accomplished and what needs to be undertaken to create the center that people envision.

On top of this, a broad level of input was built from open public meetings and separate 'open houses' for a chance to discuss ideas and issues. The first sessions were used to access the knowledge that people had accumulated on the ways they use Kelley's Corner and what they hope would change. The later sessions, which included a public meeting and online survey, were used to determine the relative values given to alternative tools to improve development and infrastructure to create the Kelley's Corner that people envision.

How Input Was and Will Be Used

In addition to informing the recommendations, all input was compiled and cataloged. At different stages of the project, public input was solicited on a variety of specific topics. First, the public was asked to identify what they think of Kelley's Corner as a commercial center and what they envision it could be in the future. Next, the public discussed alternatives for different elements of the plan. Lastly, the public was asked to weigh in on whether they could support the actions necessary to accomplish the preferred options. As discussed above, this input was obtained through several types of public interaction.

Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were held to gain background information on Kelley's Corner and issues surrounding its redevelopment. These types of interviews are commonly used to gain detailed insight from in-depth discussions with people who have a commitment to the district under consideration. A list of people identified as having an interest in Kelley's Corner was provided by the Town and interviews were conducted in person or by phone.

The results were mixed. People hoped for a better future for Kelley's Corner but voiced many concerns about the challenges in creating that future given the history of difficult decision-making and delayed actions for improvement of the center.

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee

A committee was created to help guide the consultant team and to recommend actions and events. The official mission of the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative Steering Committee is:

- To provide project oversight and direction on behalf of the Town on procedures and other matters affecting policies, politics, perception, and etiquette.
- To help maintain consistency with the Acton 2020 / Comprehensive Community Plan.
- To help with events planning, preparations, and hosting.
- To review, critique, and approve consultant-prepared materials before public release.
- To carry out any other tasks and assignments required by the project.

The membership of the Steering Committee during this study was:

- Andrew Brockway, Acton 2020 (Chair)
- Rob Bukowski, Planning Board
- Jeff Clymer, Planning Board
- Peter Darlow, Design Review Board
- J.D. Head, Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
- Larry Kenah, Economic Development Committee
- Bonny Nothern, Acton 2020
- Eric Solomon, Acton 2020
- Margaret Woolley Busse, Finance Committee

Town Planning Department staff supporting the Committee were Roland Bartl, Kristen Guichard, and Robert Hummel.

Open Public Processes

The next level of input was the use of open public meetings. These meetings were facilitated and organized to accomplish certain tasks including providing open-ended ideas as well as focused input on key elements of the plan. These meetings were designed to gain input from a wide cross-section of the Acton community; the youngest recorded participant was 10 years old.

Public Input Session

The Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative Public Input Session was held on May 7, 2014. More than 50 residents attended and had the opportunity to voice their opinion on the future of Kelley's Corner. The session was used to review existing conditions as identified by the consultant team and conduct a Visual Preference Survey that allowed participants to rank images of different types of buildings and street elements. The Visual Preference Survey was followed with break out group discussions that allowed groups to identify their favorite locations, their travel routes, and their vision of KC in ten years.

Open Houses

Open house meetings gave participants the opportunity to ask questions and provide input on the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative in an informal environment. Committee members and members of the consultant team remained at tables where people were congregating or invited. The time was spent interacting with people one-on-one or in small groups to answer questions and solicit ideas.

High School Survey

The Town staff and consultant team prepared, distributed, and cataloged a survey of Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Students during their lunch break. Several hundred surveys were completed and results tallied. Generally, the students appreciate the businesses they frequent but were hopeful for safer pathways and conditions for walking to those businesses.

Alternatives and Choices Workshop

The Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative Alternatives and Choices Workshop was held on September 16, 2014. More than 50 residents were present and participated in the discussion about the future of Kelley's Corner. The participants provided input on the consultant team's alternatives for three elements of the plan: Circulation and Roadways, Streetscape and Landscape, and Land Planning and Urban Design.

Kelley's Corner Neighborhood Informational Meeting

The Committee hosted a meeting for the abutting residential neighborhoods of Kelley's Corner on January 21, 2015. Of the 166 invitations sent, only five people attended. The Committee gave a project overview, described the community's preferred alternative for Planned Mixed Use and explained next steps to conduct feasibility analysis of this alternative. Questions about the planning process and project scope were clarified.

Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street Property Owner Meeting

On April 14, 2015 the Planning Department and members of Committee met with property owners to discuss the preliminary infrastructure improvement plans and how these improvements may affect their property. Still in the conceptual design stage, the informal meeting allowed the Committee to gather information from property owners to better inform the plan and answer any questions of concern.

Recommendations and Decisions Workshop

A community presentation was held on May 7, 2015. Approximately 30 residents were in attendance. The Cecil Group presented land planning and design recommendations based on financial analysis which tested the feasibility of the preferred alternative expressed through public feedback. The presentation included recommended zoning bylaw changes and area specific design guidelines. A proposed preliminary infrastructure improvement plan was also presented for comment and feedback. Attendees provided feedback, support and some expressed concern for aspects of the plan.

The Creation and Testing of Alternatives

Circulation, Streetscape, and Land Use Alternatives were drafted to provide a range of alternatives that would improve Kelley's Corner consistent with the public goals. The circulation improvement alternatives were designed to be feasible as State and local projects; these alternatives did not look at reconstruction of Route 2 but considered methods to address congestion within the district and improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience. The streetscape alternatives were presented as options of different design themes to determine the best future representation of the character of Kelley's Corner and Acton. The land use alternatives were architectural and site designs for private, commercial and mixed-use projects; these alternatives did not consider current zoning requirements, but included those elements that meet community goals for mixed use development.

These alternatives were reviewed first by the public so the project team could assess the public’s opinions on the concepts. People were able to provide feedback at a public session and via an online survey.

The Circulation and Streetscape Alternatives were then further refined as a design concept suitable for preparing cost projections.

The Land Use Alternatives were then refined and further tested according to the financial projections of returns on investment that a developer could anticipate on the imagined projects. From these analyses, a set of conditions was further refined to demonstrate how local regulations could facilitate the types of development that conform to the local criteria and would not be a road block to successful development.

Reactions to the Alternatives

Circulation and Roadways Alternatives

The workshop participants were provided with three alternatives: Targeted Improvements, Balanced Network, and Expanded Network. The majority of workshop participants were impressed by the rationale for the more extensive improvements in the Balanced Network. However, there were some concerns about particular aspects in the Balanced Network alternative including cost, right-of-way acquisition, 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 definitive choice between Targeted Improvements and Balanced Network.

Targeted Improvements	Balanced Network	Expanded Network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Limited improvements may be accomplished with limited new State standards</p>	<p>Network improvements will trigger significant State standards including pedestrian, bicycle improvements</p>	<p>Would be accomplished by the private sector according to Town standards</p>

Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives

The participants were provided two alternatives in this section Informal Character and Civic Character. General support was for the Informal Character with aspects of the Civic Character woven into it. For example, participants indicated a preference for the streetscape to be more formal at the intersection. Additionally, community members expressed a desire for congregation or feature areas that provide pockets of area for seating and other public uses. Residents were also supportive of the recognizable crosswalks to identify Kelley's Corner and improve pedestrian infrastructure to make the area more pedestrian-friendly. Participants expressed concern about the snow removal and maintenance cost differences between the two alternatives.

Civic Character	Informal Character
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent patterns to provide a unifying character• Sidewalks and paving typically extend to curb• Traditional design characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

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 workshop participants were in favor of at least some residential mix in the development of Kelley's Corner.

Enhanced Townscape

This is a baseline approach and is predicted to provide future development and redevelopment similar to the recent projects in Kelley's Corner. These recent projects include: the Upper Plaza (Not Your Average Joe's), Sorrento's, and CVS. This alternative received the fewest responses as the participants moved into discussing the other alternatives.

Commercial and Retail Center

Participants considered this alternative an improvement over the Enhanced Townscape approach due to residents' strong desire for large-scale redevelopment on the larger commercial properties, most notably the K-Mart site. The discussions also focused on the mix of housing and commercial uses where commercial uses are desired.

Planned Mixed Use

The majority of residents expressed an interest in having residential units in Kelley’s Corner, though only if specific conditions are imposed on the projects. These conditions include a limit on the number of units and a requirement that the projects include commercial area in the mix of uses.

Enhanced Townscape	Commercial and Retail Center	Planned Mixed Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Preferences among the Alternatives

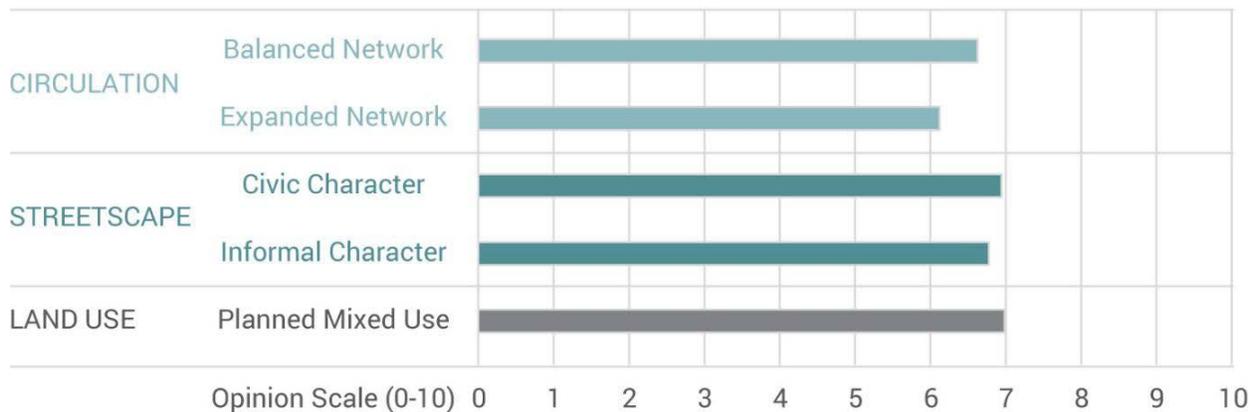
In summary, the public responses were directing the concepts in these ways:

- **Circulation and Roadways Alternatives:** The response was in support for the Balanced Network alternative on the basis that it would provide necessary measures to address the existing traffic problem in Kelley’s Corner. However, some concern was expressed about certain details of the plan.
- **Streetscape and Landscape Alternatives:** The participants were in favor of the Informal Landscape because it would be possible to integrate this design concept with the existing Kelley’s Corner feeling and construction. However, residents recommended a combination of the Informal Landscape and Civic Landscape for certain locations, especially around the main intersection.
- **Land Planning and Urban Design Alternatives:** The opportunity for Planned Mixed Use was well-received by workshop participants. Though there were some concerns expressed regarding when and how residential development would occur, many participants recognized that there will be an added value to having residential uses in Kelley’s Corner. Some were concerned with any proposed increase in height, but would be comfortable if increased height was allowed case-by-case depending on the site characteristics.

Online Survey on Alternatives

An online survey was used to obtain additional input and affirm the results of the Public Workshop on Alternatives. From October 5 until November 17, 2014, Acton residents responded to an online survey that allowed them to rank their opinions and comment upon the preferred alternatives that were selected during the September 16 Public Workshop. The online survey was publicized by Acton 2020. Respondents were able to link to the September 16 Public Workshop presentation and video of the workshop on ActonTV's website directly from the survey's webpage.

The online survey received 72 responses (67 respondents chose to self-identify and provided a home address in Acton). The opinions were generally positive as shown in the following chart.



Presentations from Public Workshops and the Online Survey can be viewed at the following links:

- **May 7, 2014 – Findings and Analysis**
<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-44834/Kelleys%20Corner%20Public%20Meeting%20May%207%2014%20Final%20Presentation.pdf>
- **September 16, 2014 – Alternatives and Choices**
<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-48299/Rev%203%20Kelleys%20Corner%20Alternatives%20and%20Choices%20September%2016.pdf>
- **November 19, 2014 - Online Survey Results**
<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-48796/2014-11-19%20MEMO%20Online%20Alternatives%20and%20Choices%20Results.pdf>
- **January 21, 2015 – KC Neighborhood Meeting**
<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-51731/KC%20Neighborhood%20Presentation%2001-21-15.pdf>
- **May 7, 2015 – Recommendations and Decisions**

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-50128/May%207%202015%20Kelleys%20Corner%20Draft%20Recommendations%20final%20ver%20-%20Updated%20with%20correct%20height%20pics.pdf>