

TAPs Program Application Attachments

Town of Acton: Kelley's Corner

1. Statement of the problem/issue.

Description of TAP Request/Issues to Address:

Kelley's Corner is Acton's main commercial center located at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue (Route 111) and Main Street (Route 27). Over the past 17+ years Acton residents have highlighted the problems and unrealized potential in Kelley's Corner. Last year, the Town adopted the Acton 2020 Master Plan once again identifying the need to improve Kelley's Corner. Residents stated they felt the town has no defined town center and expressed a strong desire to establish Kelley's Corner as a walkable "downtown". More recently, at the April 2013 Annual Town Meeting the Town approved funding for the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative to lay the ground work for transforming Kelley's Corner into a mixed-use town center. Three main tools are specified as deliverables for this project: zoning amendments, design guidelines, and public infrastructure improvement plans.

The Town requests the services of the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to provide a first review of the Kelley's Corner study area, preferably in the early fall of 2013.

The goal of this TAP project is to:

- (1) Identify overarching impediments that, to the extent that they exist in addition to unsuitable zoning standards, inhibit or impair Kelley's Corner's transformation into a vibrant, walkable, mixed use center;
- (2) Offer suggestions for overcoming the impediments and moving forward and;
- (3) Within a wholistic, problem-solving approach, focus on the projected market conditions, trends and challenges for commercial and residential real estate that may conflict with Acton's town center redevelopment goals, and recommend tools and initiatives that Acton can pursue to further its goals.

Concurrently or immediately following the TAP, the Town plans to start the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative. Whether the TAP launches the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative or stands somewhere within its early project phases, its findings and recommendations would inform, hopefully enhance, and possibly re-focus the Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative.

History

There have been numerous efforts over the past 17+ years to improve Kelley's Corner. In 1995 the "Kelley's Corner Specific Area Plan" was created, followed by the 1997 "Kelley's Corner Circulation Plan." Both had recommendations for zoning bylaw amendments. Some of the recommended zoning changes passed and some failed at various Town Meetings. Opposition came largely from residential abutters. After 2001 the matter was deferred indefinitely.

In 2010 the Town teamed up with Tufts University, to conduct a study entitled, "Revisioning Kelley's Corner: An Experiment in Public Participation." This study

focused on empowering residents through public participation using visualization tools to share their ideas for a revitalized Kelley's Corner. At the same time the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan Outreach Phase I commenced, followed by Phase II—creation of the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan. The 2012 Annual Town Meeting adopted its goals and objectives, and shortly thereafter the Planning Board adopted the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan as Acton's new master plan.

One of the Town's overarching themes of the Acton 2020 Master Plan is to direct future growth to existing centers that have capacity for infill and denser development while preserving open spaces in the more outlying areas. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) was identified as the primary implementation tool. Kelley's Corner will be the first center studied within the parameters of this model. An important aspect of this project will be to incorporate new development in a shape and form that is acceptable to the community – especially residential abutters, with digital visualization tools expected to play a large role in this process.

Current Status of Study Area:

Kelley's Corner is a mixed use area at the intersection of Rt. 27/Main Street and Rt. 111/Massachusetts Ave. (the latter a State controlled road including the intersection) near the geographic center of Acton. The Kelley's Corner zoning district is made up of approximately 47 acres of land. This area is dominated by commercial uses with some multi-family residences scattered along the perimeter. Design and layout largely stems from the 1960's and early 1970's with singular orientation towards accommodating the automobile as the only form of transportation. The businesses consist primarily of retail and restaurant uses, extending east from this intersection towards Rt. 2. The Charter Road school campus to the west and residential, mostly single-family home neighborhoods to the south abut the Kelley's Corner district. Strip mall shopping developments with a significant amount of paved parking in front house several businesses. Major tenants are Roche Brothers, T.J. Maxx and CVS. K-Mart shares a large parcel on Main Street with a vacant McDonald's building just south of the principle intersection. Several smaller buildings on separate parcels contain professional and medical offices, banks, and restaurants. A Sunoco filling station occupies a prominent corner in the intersection. A former muffler shop is now converted to a restaurant, and a bowling alley located on the south side of Rt. 111/Massachusetts Ave. has received a modest facelift.

Recent redevelopments for TD Bank and Sovereign Bank forecast a more walkable town center – the bank buildings are at the street and parking/drive-ups are to the side and rear. Three parcels on the west side of Rt. 27/Main Street contain three different multifamily housing developments; two are recent redevelopments from small single-family homes. Kelley's Corner has been served by sewer since 2002 and has capacity for additional development if higher density zoning were allowed.

2. Sponsor information:

The Town of Acton Planning Department will be the sponsor for this TAP project. The "Acton 2020 Implementation Committee," a Town appointed committee, will be working

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**This is a preliminary list of individuals we can draw from who could contribute to the TAP.*