

Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Sponsoring Boards' and Committees' Strategic Goals

Introduction

The five boards and committees that sponsor the *Natick 360* strategic planning process each met the week of September 17-20 to develop strategic goals. Each publicly-posted open meeting was organized as a study session, with no official votes taken. Independent facilitators helped the boards and committees accomplish their objective.

The boards' and committees' strategic goals are more similar than they are different, though differences in specific language are apparent.

This document has three parts following this introduction:

Comparison Matrix

The matrix compares the verbatim strategic goals produced by all five boards and committees, arrayed by topic, and in random order.

The 11 topic headings (“Finance,” “Communications and Participation,” “Public Safety,” etc.), were developed by the consultants. They are convenient labels for grouping similar concepts; they denote no policy intent, and may be eliminated in the final strategic plan. While individuals may have different opinions about the labels—for example: should a new high school be under “Education” or “Infrastructure?” should “Affordable Housing” issues be grouped with “Development” issues?—the focus should be on the content of the strategic goals rather than on the labels.

The underlined text in the comparison matrix was used to develop the “DRAFT” strategic goals in the last section (below). All the other text appears in the “Related Goals and/or Action Items” column.

Summary of Similarities and Differences

Following the comparison matrix is a narrative summary of similarities and differences across the five boards and committees. This summary uses the same 11 topic headings shown on the comparison matrix.

“DRAFT” Proposed Natick Strategic Goals

The proposed “DRAFT” is a single set of strategic goals, grouped under the same 11 topics, to serve as a basis for further discussion by the five sponsoring boards and committees. The “DRAFT” represents an attempt by the consultants to develop a common set of goals as a starting point for discussion. No information has been removed in this process—

Natick 360

Natick 360, the Town’s long-term strategic planning process, is sponsored by five boards and committees:

- Board of Selectmen
- Conservation Commission
- Finance Committee
- Planning Board
- School Committee

Each group met in September 2007 to develop goals for the final strategic plan. Members drew upon several sources:

- Each participant’s experience and knowledge of the community;
- The Values and Vision Statements developed and approved in November and December 2006;
- The Strategic Choices developed and approved in April and May, 2007;
- The report of the community-wide random sample survey conducted in July and August, 2007.

The next steps are: (a) narrow the five sets of strategic goals to one; (b) identify ways to achieve the strategic goals; and (c) assign time-lines to each goal.

The nine-member Strategic Planning Oversight Committee oversees the Natick 360 process. Independent planning experts, Blackerby Associates, manage and facilitate the project.

all boards' and committees' goals are represented in the "DRAFT." The consultants attempted to borrow language from the goals of the board or committee with ultimate responsibility; for example, in school-related matters, language was borrowed from the School Committee's goals. The underlined text in the comparison matrix shows which language was used to create the common goal. All other language was moved into the column, "Related Goals and/or Action Items."

For example, in the Education topic area, four of the sponsoring boards had goals. The primary goal in the "DRAFT" was borrowed from the School Committee language:

"Improve educational quality, opportunities and outcomes for each student, regardless of age and ability."

Related goals that fall under this more general theme from other sponsoring boards were moved into the "Related Goals and/or Action Items" column; for example, the Planning Board proposed "ensuring that both the infrastructure and operations of Natick education programs are among the best" and that "its programs and physical facilities are integrated into the community."

There are far more similarities than differences in language among the five sponsoring boards, and the consultants made best efforts to capture the essence of the primary goals in this manner, while keeping the ideas of all contributing boards and committees intact.

One area where committees diverged slightly was in Infrastructure. Some committees chose to keep the language generic—talking about "maintaining and improving infrastructure" or "developing a comprehensive plan for maintaining and improving infrastructure"—while other committees chose to be very specific "Build a High School" or "Build a Community/Senior Center."

We are suggesting in this situation that the consolidated goal statement be kept generic, and that individual projects, such as the High School and/or Community/Senior Center, be listed as specific action items under the more generic goal. In this way, the specific initiatives can be kept in the plan while not greatly expanding the number of high-level goals.

In this fashion, all information from all sponsoring boards was moved into the "DRAFT."

Comparison Matrix of Boards’ and Committees’ Strategic Goals¹

	Board of Selectmen	Conservation Commission	Finance Committee	Planning Board	School Committee
Finance	<u>Assure short-term and long-term financial stability of the Town</u> through well-planned economic development, budgeting and management of Town finances.		Solve the recurring funding shortfall for the Town’s budget and ordinary capital needs by optimizing and enhancing revenue sources and managing expenses.		Secure adequate funding in order to <u>maintain and improve services</u> . Continued focus on operational efficiency of schools.
Communications and Participation	<u>People are well-informed about what the Town is doing; people vote and participate in boards and committees</u> ; the Town deploys all communications channels available.	Improve communications among Town departments, boards and committees. Lead development of new mechanisms for timely dissemination of information related to civic affairs. Encourage broad public participation in civic affairs.	Develop effective communication channels between the Town and its citizens.		Involve community in schools’ success.
Public Safety	<u>Maintain public safety commensurate with growth and change.</u>		<u>Maintain public safety and health services</u> (police, fire, Board of Health and inspection services) <u>commensurate with growth.</u>		
Housing and Development	Facilitate affordable housing to gain control of development while maintaining economic diversity.	<u>Proactively plan for development</u> in order to protect and preserve natural resources, open space and Natick’s aquifer. Distribute new development and redevelopment to reduce traffic levels. Achieve and maintain a requisite level of affordable housing.	Continue to manage community planning, addressing 40B, zoning and traffic on major arteries (Rtes. 9, 16, 27 and 135).	Create and maintain housing that is affordable for a broad range of income levels.	

¹ Underlined text appears in the proposed “straw man” under, “What do you want Natick to accomplish? All other text is under “Related Goals and/or Action Items.”

	Board of Selectmen	Conservation Commission	Finance Committee	Planning Board	School Committee
Education	Support public education critical to the future of the community.		Continue to improve educational outcomes for all students in the most economically efficient manner.	Ensure that both the infrastructure and operations of Natick education programs are among the best, and that its programs and physical facilities are integrated into the community.	<u>Improve educational quality, opportunities and outcomes for each student, regardless of age and ability.</u>
Infrastructure	Maintain and improve infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, water and sewer, buildings, schools, etc.	<u>Develop a comprehensive system for maintaining and improving public facilities and infrastructure.</u>	<u>Develop and implement a plan for extraordinary capital projects, such as high school and community/senior center.</u>		Build a new high school.
		Build a new replacement high school.			Preserve existing capital investment through adequate maintenance.
		Build a community / senior center.			Upgrade infrastructure of schools to meet educational goals.
Transportation	<u>Improve traffic flows and minimize the impact of traffic on the Town</u> by increasing public transit, improving roadways and expanding alternative transportation options.	Reduce car dependence by building the rail trail from downtown to the Framingham line.		Invest in and develop the transportation infrastructure, including a <u>multi-modal transportation system that addresses Natick's needs within the regional context.</u>	
		Improve traffic flows.			
		Increase the availability and efficiency of public transportation.			
Open Space		Increase public awareness of and access to the Town's recreational amenities and natural resources.		Secure open space and ensure that development is completed in a sustainable and environmentally-sensitive way.	
		Strategically apply conservation fund resources to advance priority open space, recreation and natural resource projects.			
		<u>Encourage Natick's transition to a Green Community.</u>			

	Board of Selectmen	Conservation Commission	Finance Committee	Planning Board	School Committee
Economic Development		Encourage and support small business development.		Attract business with high-quality jobs and target, dedicate and protect spaces to incubate and expand businesses.	
Natick Center		Modify the Town's regulatory framework to encourage a diverse and vibrant Natick Center.	Preserve, promote and continue to support a vibrant downtown.	<u>Promote, foster and enable an economically, socially and culturally vibrant and diverse Natick Center.</u>	
		Ensure adequate supply of parking and public transportation to support a vibrant Natick Center.			
Connectivity and Services	<u>Provide for the intellectual, physical and social well-being of all Natick residents.</u>			Promote a Town that is socially, economically and physically connected and diverse.	

Summary of Similarities and Differences Among Boards' and Committees' Strategic Goals

The following sections provide a narrative summary of the similarities and differences among the strategic goals developed by the five sponsoring boards and committees.

Town Finances

The Board of Selectmen and Finance and School Committees address the Town's financial condition in their strategic goals. The Selectmen noted in their discussions that, unless this issue is fully addressed, the rest of the strategic plan is unlikely to be implemented.

The Selectmen and the Finance Committee address both the short-term and long-term aspects of the Town's financial stability, though the Finance Committee's language refers to the recurring nature of the disparity between revenues and expenses.

Both the Selectmen's and the Finance Committee's versions would manage revenues and expenses, with the Finance Committee also addressing "ordinary" capital expenses, and the Selectmen adding economic development to the mix of anticipated actions. The School Committee's version refers to the revenue side of Town finances, to maintain and improve services.

Communications and Participation

Four groups address the need for improved Town communications and participation in civic affairs. Three groups, Selectmen, Conservation and Finance, address improving communications from the Town to residents, using multiple communications channels. Two groups, Selectmen and Conservation, further emphasize increasing civic participation through board and committee membership, with the Selectmen also addressing increasing voting. The School Committee addresses community participation in the schools' success. In addition, the Conservation Commission addresses improving communications among Town departments, and among boards and committees.

Public Safety

Two groups, Selectmen and Finance, would set a goal to maintain public safety commensurate with growth. The Finance Committee explicitly defines public safety to include police, fire, Board of Health and inspection services, while the Selectmen note in discussions that they consider public health and inspections to be included in the public safety discussions.

The Selectmen add "...and change" to their goal to address non-growth situations, such as population aging that could change the balance between fire-related and ambulance-related missions.

Housing and Development

Four groups address affordable housing. Three groups (Selectmen, Conservation and Planning) set goals to make establishment of affordable housing easier, using different verbs: "facilitate," "create and maintain" or "achieve and maintain."

The Finance Committee calls for managing community planning, addressing 40B [affordable housing], zoning and traffic on major arteries. The Conservation Commission also addresses planning for development, to protect and preserve natural resources, open space and the aquifer.

The Conservation Commission further calls for distributing both new development and redevelopment in ways that would reduce traffic levels. The discussions focused on establishing satellite commercial cores that would serve neighborhoods within walking or biking distance.

Education

Four groups address education issues directly (in discussions, the Conservation Commission deferred to the School Committee to address education issues).

The School and Finance Committees both focus on the quality of student outcomes, while the Selectmen focus on how critical education is to the community's future.

The Finance and School Committees also note the need for economy and operational efficiency in schools, to achieve educational outcomes.

The Planning Board calls for both the educational infrastructure and programs to be among the best, and adds that programs and facilities should be integrated into the community.

Four groups also address the need for school facilities; grouped below under "infrastructure."

Infrastructure

Four groups (Selectmen, Conservation, Finance and School) address the need for maintaining and improving infrastructure, broadly defined. The Conservation Commission would develop a system for these processes. The Finance Committee prefers developing and implementing a plan for extraordinary capital projects.

Three groups refer directly to the need for a new high school to replace the current aging structure. The Conservation Commission and School Committee addressed this need specifically, while the Finance Committee includes it as one example of the types of extraordinary capital projects that should be planned and implemented.

A fourth group, the Selectmen, includes schools in a list of the types of infrastructure that should be maintained and improved. The School Committee separates maintenance from improvement, calling for preserving existing capital through adequate maintenance, and further calling for upgrading the schools infrastructure to meet educational goals.

Three groups also referred directly to the proposed community / senior center. The Conservation Commission and School Committee would both build the facility, and the Finance Committee includes it as one example of the types of extraordinary capital projects that should be planned and implemented.

Transportation

Three groups address the need to improve Natick's traffic congestion using a broad, multi-layered approach:

The Selectmen would improve traffic flows and minimize traffic impacts through an array of approaches, including transit, roadway improvements, and alternative options.

The Planning Board uses different language to achieve much the same things, calling for a multi-modal transportation system infrastructure, to address Natick's needs within the regional context.

The Conservation Commission breaks the issue into three elements: reducing car dependence by building the rail trail (the only group mentioning the rail trail specifically); improving traffic flows; and increasing public transportation.

Open Space

Both the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board address open space issues:

The Conservation Commission breaks the issue into three elements: increasing awareness and access to recreational amenities and natural resources; using conservation funds to advance priority open space, recreation and natural resource projects; and encouraging the Town's transition to a "Green Community," which it does not define.

The Planning Board addresses two elements: securing open space, and injecting sustainability and environmental sensitivity into the development process.

Economic Development

The Conservation Commission and the Planning Board both address economic development issues:

The Conservation Commission focuses attention on small business development.

The Planning Board focuses on attracting jobs, and addresses the need to preserve commercial space for business incubation and expansion.

Natick Center

Three groups (Conservation, Finance and Planning) address the specific needs of Natick Center:

All three would support a vibrant downtown, with the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board adding "diverse" to their goal. The three use a variety of verbs to accomplish vibrancy, such as: "Preserve, promote and continue to support..." (Finance); "Promote, foster and enable..." (Planning); and "Modify the Town's regulatory framework to encourage..." (Conservation).

The Conservation Commission also specifically addressed the need for adequate parking and public transportation to support a vibrant Natick Center.

Connectivity and Services

Two groups address the connectivity of the Town's residents, as enhanced by Town services:

The Board of Selectmen address the Town's social services, focusing on intellectual, physical and social well-being of residents. In discussions, the "intellectual" includes the libraries, "physical" includes recreation activities, and "social" includes Town events and senior center services.

Similarly, the Planning Board addresses the Town's social, economic and physical connectivity and diversity.

“DRAFT” Natick Strategic Goals²

	Proposed Consolidated Goals	Related Goals and/or Action Items
Finance	Assure short-term and long-term financial stability of the Town	Optimizing and enhancing revenue sources.
		Managing expenses.
		Improving operational efficiency.
		Well-planned economic development.
Communications and Participation	Ensure that people are well-informed about what the Town is doing, so that people vote and participate in Town boards and committees.	Develop new and existing effective communication channels between the Town and its Citizens.
		Improve communications among Town departments, boards and committees.
		Encourage broad public participation in civic affairs.
		Involve the community in the schools’ successes.
Public Safety	Maintain public safety commensurate with growth and change.	Evaluate the on-going needs of relevant departments such as Police, Fire, Emergency Medical, Board of Health, Inspection Services, etc.
Housing and Development	Proactively plan for new development appropriate for neighborhoods and the community	Facilitate affordable housing to gain control of development and maintain economic diversity.
		Ensure that new development and redevelopment protects and preserves Natick’s natural resources, open space and aquifer.
		Distribute new development and redevelopment to reduce traffic impacts, particularly on major arteries (Rtes. 9, 16, 27 and 135).

² All the text in the comparison matrix was used to develop this proposed draft “DRAFT.” The underlined text in the comparison matrix appears in the column, “Proposed Consolidated Goals.” The remainder of the text in the comparison matrix appears in the column, “Related Goals and/or Action Items.”

	Proposed Consolidated Goals	Related Goals and/or Action Items
Education	Improve educational quality, opportunities and outcomes for each student, regardless of age and ability.	Ensure that Natick education programs are among the best.
		Ensure that Natick schools infrastructure is among the best.
		Ensure that Natick education programs and facilities are integrated into the community.
Infrastructure	Develop and implement a plan for extraordinary capital projects.	Build a new replacement Natick High School.
		Upgrade infrastructure of all Natick schools to meet educational goals.
	Develop a comprehensive system for maintaining and improving public facilities and infrastructure.	Build a new community / recreation / senior center.
Transportation	Improve traffic flows and minimize the impact of traffic on the Town.	Evaluate the Town’s needs for maintenance and improvement of public facilities and infrastructure such as Roads, Sidewalks, Water and sewer, Buildings, and Schools, etc.
		Increase the availability and efficiency of public transit.
		Improve the efficiency of roadways.
		Expand alternative transportation options.
		Explore a multi-modal transportation system that addresses Natick’s needs within the regional context.
Open Space	Encourage Natick’s transition to a Green Community.	Reduce care dependence by building a rail trail from downtown to the Framingham line.
		Ensure that development is completed in a sustainable and environmentally-sensitive way.
		Increase public awareness of and access to the Town’s recreational amenities and natural resources.
		Strategically apply Conservation Fund resources to advance priority open space, recreation and natural resource projects.

	Proposed Consolidated Goals	Related Goals and/or Action Items
Economic Development	Attract businesses with high-quality jobs.	Target, dedicate and protect spaces to incubate and expand businesses.
		Encourage and support small business development.
Natick Center	Promote, foster and enable an economically, socially and culturally vibrant and diverse Natick Center.	Modify the Town’s regulatory framework to encourage a diverse and vibrant Natick Center.
		Ensure an adequate supply of parking and public transportation to support a vibrant Natick Center.
Connectivity and Services	Provide for the intellectual, physical and social well-being of all Natick residents.	Promote a Town that is socially, economically and physically connected and diverse.