

# Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



## Joint Boards and Committees Meeting February 12, 2007

### Introduction

On February 12 and 13, 2007, members of the five boards and committees that sponsor the *Natick 360* strategic planning process met jointly to consider strategic planning questions. The five boards and committee are: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Planning Board and School Committee. Members were invited to attend either date; both meetings had the same agenda. All five boards and committees posted public notices for both meetings.

The participants reviewed the *Natick 360* consensus value and vision statements that they had earlier accepted unanimously. Key questions were, "What are the gaps between Natick today and the vision for Natick?" "What are the barriers to achieving the Natick vision statements?" "What are things that will help Natick achieve its vision statements?" Facilitators urged participants to keep their perspective broad, at "30,000 feet."

In small groups, participants wrote their issues, gaps and barriers on sticky notes, which they read aloud and placed on a wall. Participants then rearranged the notes into clusters, and labeled each cluster. The issues are shown below, in their labeled clusters. The participants created a network of clusters with different mixes of issues; thus, several issues may be repeated as under several clusters.

The issues and clusters are presented below in random order; no prioritization is implied. Issues that appear in more than one cluster are repeated. Repetition does not imply priority; rather, it means that some issues may be looked at from several different perspectives.

Participants at the February 12 meeting included:

- Dirk Coburn, School Committee
- Robert Eisenmenger, Planning Board
- Terri Evans, Planning Board
- Carol Gloff, Board of Selectmen
- Stephen Meyler, School Committee
- Julian Munnich, Planning Board
- David Murphy, School Committee (left early)
- Josh Ostrow, Board of Selectmen
- Mike Reardon, Finance Committee
- Ken Soderholm, Planning Board

Members of the public who were present at the February 12 meeting included:

- Rosemary Driscoll
- Craig Ross
- David Parish

## Issues, Gaps and Barriers

The issues, gaps and barriers that the participants identified at the February 12 joint meeting are shown below, as bulleted items. The clusters are shown in headings.

### Avoided / unexamined choices

- Leadership fatigue
- Civic communication gaps between sender and seeker (receiver)
- Efforts trump results too often
- Communication between government and public is not sufficient to fully inform the public
- Lack of effective team collaboration.
- Insufficiently welcoming
- Not as informed and engaged as we think we are.
- Need to identify ways to control healthcare costs
- Public safety resources are insufficient to meet our needs
- Limited revenue sources competing for same dollars
- Impact of energy costs have had a negative impact on Town budgets

### Effective Leadership and Communication

- Leadership fatigue
- Civic communication gaps between sender and seeker (receiver)
- Efforts trump results too often
- Communication between government and public is not sufficient to fully inform the public
- Lack of effective team collaboration.
- Insufficiently welcoming
- Not as informed and engaged as we think we are.

### Resources do not equal needed services

- Need to identify ways to control healthcare costs
- Public safety resources are insufficient to meet our needs
- Limited revenue sources competing for same dollars
- Impact of energy costs have had a negative impact on Town budgets
- Natick has not invested in its schools which is equivalent to comparable towns.
- Invest in public education is not supported by the entire community

### Educational priority

- Natick has not invested in its schools which is equivalent to comparable towns.
- Invest in public education is not supported by the entire community

### Infrastructure / transportation needs

- Traffic / transportation
- Insufficient regional transportation solutions
- Access to Natick's core
- Our largest public transportation (school transportation) is compartmentalized away from the general public.

- We don't have enough public transportation, road capacity or sidewalks for today's or tomorrow's needs.
- Capital improvements, all
- Infrastructure / facilities need upgrades,, more diligent maintenance
- Infrastructure buildings: senior center, high school, and rebuild the recreation center.

### **Unmet rising needs**

- Increasing changing demographic and public health concerns

### **Unmanaged growth**

- Our planning support services are not enough to monitor and channel development
- Tend to have limited planning process.
- How to continue to attract commercial high-level development.
- Acquire open space before it's all gone
- "Small town" competing with large commercial.
- Property availability and will: Enhanced acquisition of open space, playgrounds, ball fields, walking trails, etc.
- Maintain services for all residents
- Un-reconciled conflict between affordability and service enhancements.
- Keep Natick affordable: housing costs and taxes are more than some can afford.

### **Planning challenges**

- Our planning support services are not enough to monitor and channel development
- Tend to have limited planning process.
- How to continue to attract commercial high-level development.
- Acquire open space before it's all gone
- "Small town" competing with large commercial.
- Property availability and will: Enhanced acquisition of open space, playgrounds, ball fields, walking trails, etc.

### **Perception Disconnect**

- Maintain services for all residents
- Un-reconciled conflict between affordability and service enhancements.
- Keep Natick affordable: housing costs and taxes are more than some can afford.

## Process Check

Participants provided feedback on the meeting, including things they liked about the meeting (plusses), and things they would change for future meetings (deltas):

<b>Things Participants Liked (Plusses)</b>	<b>Things Participants Would Change (Deltas)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Fountain Hills (AZ) discussion good and helpful</li><li>● Humor</li><li>● Kept at a high level</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explicit example before small groups; phrase gaps</li><li>● Spring water</li><li>● Limit double clustering</li><li>● Shorter process overview</li></ul>