

Natick 360
Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Public Input Meeting Results
February 15, 2007

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Introduction

On February 15, 2007, the *Natick 360* Strategic Planning Oversight Committee invited members of the public to provide input to the strategic planning process. A total of 31 participants met to identify barriers that prevent Natick from achieving its vision.

In small groups, participants identified barriers to each of Natick’s seven vision statements, and arranged their observations into clusters. Each small group addressed each vision statement in turn.

At the end of the program, the small groups stepped back for a “big picture” look at their work, and identified three “big ideas” for Natick’s future. The facilitation team recorded their input.

Barriers to Natick's Vision

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick is a healthy community of diverse and inter-connected citizens, businesses, organizations, and neighborhoods, where citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels can live, work, and thrive.

Affordable housing & mean it
Housing prices pushing out mid-income
Opportunities for 1st time homebuyers in Natick for Natick High School graduates
Zoning for small house/small lots
Cluster development-smaller house lots
Cost of housing
More homes, less condos
Affordable housing
Affordable rentals
\$ housing
Moderate income housing that's compatible with small town feel
Affordable housing or some type of assistance
Relief funds for current owners who need some type of assistance to stay here

Better infrastructure: sidewalks, bicycle paths, wider roads

Diverse business

Parking

Available funds for charitable giving
Must narrow gap between rich and poor

Community organic farm where young and old can participate

Real estate tax burden
Different tax rates between business and residential

Encourage walking
Improved mass transit for job opportunities
Transit
Transit to city centre from all parts of town
Bridge over route 9 for pedestrians connecting town forests
Housing close to public transit

Mitigate air pollution
Preserve open space
Control development

Need to encourage diverse groups to live

DRAFT

Lack of incentive for young people to move in
Natick is not diverse (103% Caucasian)

Ethnic festivals

Ethnic celebrations

Need more culture

Market the town to attract diversity

Support TCAN

More restaurants; ethnic food

Recreation center

Social clubs

Social things that don't cost a lot

Better senior center

Recreational center

Recreation center as centerpiece for exercise

Community center or use schools

Teen or community center

Public building for teens

Take over national guard for recreational center

Playgrounds for the kiddies

Pedestrians are people too

Businesses linked through a website

Healthy buildings

Good, clean water

Keep the people informed and involved with a newsletter

100% voter participation

College, post-high school education

Job training program

In-town mentoring program: High school students mentor middle school students, 20 year olds
mentor high school students

Inter-religious activities

Encourage people to experience Natick before bitching

Time!

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community;

Milfoil in the lake
Defoliate the lake
Protect lakes ecologically
Natick Labs environment impact

Improve / maintain dry pond beach access to public
Accessibility to Lake Cochituate for Natick residents only
Skating on the Lake made / verified safe by Town
Public boating ramps and facilities
Good access / facilities to pond

Need program to discourage environmental poisons

Not enough trees, especially along streets

More Broadmoors
Limited natural resources
Green spaces evidence lack of care
More public-owned open space

Encourage ecological use of energy

Few play areas for children

National Guard area: make something nice out of it

Using too much salt on roads

Traffic

Finish construction on Rte. 9 by Veterans Park

Connecting bridge over Rte. 9 for pedestrians and bikes
Running & bike trail around Lake Cochituate
Rail trail [3 repetitions]
Walking / biking trail (rail trail)
Rail bike trail
Fund rail trail
Money for rail trail
Connected trails
Running trail
Bike path [2 repetitions]
Trails
Walking trails

DRAFT

Pedestrian / walking paths to the Lake
Better marked trails
Trails and trail maps
Need better trail maps
Own the land for trails (Town needs to own)

Historic walking trails through and around town
Historic self-guided walking tour(s): downtown area of “industrial revolution” buildings, etc.
Historic self-guided walking tour(s): South Natick area with history of Town

Signage to parks

More recycling; transfer exchange

Preserve the Natick Community Organic Farm
Make Natick Community Organic Farm perpetually protected for future operations, never to be developed
Find ways to make farms economically viable
NCOF: keep the land for public use
Keep Town Forest
Support for / expansion of organic farm
Organic farm
Farms keep

No more big big houses

Ensure new developments don't harm open areas
Too much density at Paperboard site: traffic, etc. fallout
Limit development
Limit development: declare a moratorium on development
Over-development
Need funds to purchase critical parcels
Control development [2 repetitions]
Architectural design to fit / enhance
Stop mansionization

Funding exp. Community Preservation Act
Adopt the Community Preservation Act
Money to maintain properties
Open space
Careful consideration of money spent for open space vs. decline of core services
Marketing of open spaces
Have an open space quota
Open space design and master plan
Fund open space acquisitions
Utilize open space fund to maintain and acquire
Understanding the value of trees and open space

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Maintain parks and open spaces permanently

Maintain sport fields

Keep golf course

Support the golf course [2 repetitions]

Golf course

Cost vs. amount of use. Is it worth it?

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick Center is the vibrant core of the community, a unique and accessible destination for commerce, community and culture, day and night;

Better signage
Signage

Place for drinking and dancing at night
Need a great bar or dance club
Dancing at night
More night-time places
More night time destinations in downtown
College downtown

Coffee & ice cream shop needed at night
Need ice cream or dessert place that is open late
Need Starbucks
Bakery on Common, not Starbucks
Encourage unique ethnic restaurants (non-Rte. 9 types)
Diversity of businesses
Fine restaurants needed
Different mix of restaurants
More restaurants
Good bar

Increase visibility and promotion of Natick Center Associates
Inform public of the many values of downtown
Blue pages: what's in them

Updated web site of town cultural events

Improvement of properties and better use
Restoration, especially "missing tooth building"

Need a kids attraction: teens

Parking [seven repetitions]
Need parking garage
Parking!
More handicap parking spots
Parking attracts people and money
More parking
Parking meters
Parking needs to be a public/private joint venture

Need an indoor meeting place (winter)

DRAFT

Need to balance the business to residence ratio to avoid a deserted downtown at night
Downtown residential construction so residents will be able to walk to stores and work; keeps downtown alive

Need more residents downtown

Risk of overdoing it

Mixed use; housing above shops

Don't allow overdevelopment; no hi-rise apartments

Too many transient people: over condo-ized

Competition from Mall and non-local ; but need that too

Need grocery store, etc.

Need more food stores

Grocery store [2 repetitions]

Food / grocery store downtown

Lack of real grocery / food store in center

More diversity of retail shops

Attract more businesses and different

Variety of shops

Need way for kids and others without cars to get to downtown

Crosswalks

Plowed sidewalks

Rail trail

No downtown museum

Tourism: history

Try to keep it from losing the prominence it has now

Public transportation

Need bus transportation

Public transit

Increase public transportation usage

Frequent local bus

Local bus to train; more routes than currently offered

Senior center and activities

Poor flow of traffic patterns

Diver pass-through traffic from downtown

Traffic is an obstacle

Traffic [3 repetitions]

Traffic congestion

Rte. 27 major pass-through for towns south of us

DRAFT

Turn Oak Street light on Rte. 9 into overpass

More variety in summer presentations on the Common

Atmosphere

Public art

More public art!

More benches

Great fountain

No hoodlums; hanging out at Georges & Honey Farms

Safe after-hour social options: pub, coffee house

Police patrol: slow down drivers who use as cut-through

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's public schools and programs are recognized as among the best.

Criteria for "the best" we won't be able to outspend Weston.

Funding, funding, funding

Unfunded mandates

State funding

Funding: infrastructure, teachers

Technology for future

Lack of funds; inadequate supplies; extra tutoring

Funding for textbooks, resources, tutoring

Money for teachers instruction program

Teachers / staff consistently receive opportunities to learn new teaching techniques

High school renovation

Rebuilding of high school, or K-4

Tutoring

Mentoring

Scholarships for NHS graduates

Lack of competitive benchmarking (other than MCAS)

Educate parents about getting involved

Lack of parent involvement

Parent involvement

Unrealistic expectations

Competing priorities

Schools need shop, wood, etc.

More arts, drawing, etc.

More music & arts disciplines

The arts (orchestra)

Need more flow from community arts organizations to schools

More lifestyle "real world" activities

Math curriculum

Lack of town recognition of student excellence

Programs / funding for advanced students

Classes for all abilities!

Preserve & endow the Natick Community Organic Farm

Academic quality

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Find way to get rid of poor teachers
Hired qualified staff capable of teaching students at all levels of learning
No tenure
Attract top talent
Retain top talent
Teacher attraction strategy (lack of)
Providing housing to teachers
Teacher grading system on performance
Recruit & reward excellence

Controlled development, so have resources that can meet number of students
Projecting population shift, impact on enrollment levels

Balance between college-bound and vocational education

Need technology in schools

Go back to K-8, or establish K-8 school
Move away from middle school concept, K-8
Middle school experienced teachers

Great internship program with local businesses
Collaborate with local businesses
Create a work / study program for high school

Longer school day
Other after-school programs
Need after school programs (affordable)
After school programs that are affordable (limited space available now)
After school programs: homework, play, hobbies
After school programs
Before school programs; breakfast counseling

Less homework to encourage more diverse activities for kids
Allow diverse interests to thrive in high school
Encourage more diverse learning experiences

New high school
New high school
New high school building
All students attend state-of-the-art educational facilities
High school is falling apart
Inadequate high school
Better physical plants
Green high school
Environmentally friendly school buildings
Building maintenance (upkeep)

DRAFT

Pay the teachers what they are worth

Best for who? Must provide for students at all levels

Teach to entire school population, not just the tops & bottoms

Need better publicity to market positives of school system

Don't teach to MCAS!

Move away from MCAS based teaching

Funding for non-MCAS related subjects

Don't emphasize just MCAS subjects

Students are all given the tools to be successful on all standardized tests (MCAS, SAT, AP, etc.)

People from all over New England come to Natick to see the good things about Natick and want to copy us.

Introduce public charter schools to offer more choice to families

Create an apprenticeship program for grades 5-12

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As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's self-government, supported by informed and engaged citizens, is fiscally sound, delivers services efficiently and communicates effectively with the public;

Efficiency in Town Government

Town does not appear efficient; e.g., roads not well cared for

Handicapped spaces maintained: signs, etc.

Set up assisted listening devices

Value of services vs. property taxes

Must use new developments to defray cost of increased demand on public services

Accountability & openness

Accountability

Change of government system: mayor instead of Board of Selectmen

Town Administrator needs more decision power

Promote town volunteer opportunities

Need more volunteers!

Money

Have State step up and fund the initiatives they put in place

Plan when Town needs conflict with State Government or funding

Long-range Town budget, rather than "crisis" reactions

Better description of committees' and boards' responsibilities and missions

Work toward board / committee interaction with common goals

Committees don't always agree on process

Lack of communication across functions

Planning Board, Selectmen, School Committee, etc. need to meet together more often to make cohesive Town plans

Strategic and coordinated planning

Overlapping of services

Avoid "piece meal" plans

Public participation in Finance Committee hearings (not just interest groups)

Provide incentives from healthy Town employees

Prop 2-1/2

Limited financial resources

Money: nobody wants to pay more

Some sort of a split tax

Ineffective communications

Communication [2 repetitions]

Communicate the value of local government

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Better communication from Town Government to citizens
Use all means of communications to reach citizens
Getting the word out in lots of ways
Information outreach
Alternate communications: example, newsletters
Town-wide newsletters: neighborhood based; precinct based
Newsletter delivered by email: hot topics; meetings
Web site and newsletters
Web site deficiencies
Limited use of technology
Technology
Lack of effective use of technology / web site (Town site)
Poor Town web site
Better Town web site
All "Natick web sites" have to be linked
Meetings (Government) minutes accessible through Town web site
Updated web site connecting businesses, government, schools, etc.

Time restraints of Citizens and employees

I feel Natick's current Public Works employees are very accommodating and helpful

Improve involvement by more Natick residents
Public does not participate very much
Voter turnout
More involvement
Encourage Town Meeting participation

Open house: Town Government is great thing to build on

Three members from Selectmen

Education, education, education, education, education!

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick’s public infrastructure and buildings fulfill their function efficiently and effectively to the satisfaction of the community, and are maintained in good working order.

Communicate with landlords of buildings in town to keep in good condition

Traffic light coordination
Traffic patterns
Public transportation?
Bike lanes?

Take over National Guard for a recreational facility & fields

Green buildings with efficiency standards
Energy conservation
Solar power
“Green buildings”
Lack of efficiency standards (energy)
Green business, schools, homes; off grid by 2020

High school
School facility funding
New high school
New “green” high school
New high school ASAP so don’t spend on so many stop-gaps
Funding for new high school
Need high school
Dollars
Plan for fluctuation of needs over time; i.e., school population decreases, school buildings sold, the future needs require new schools

Continued funding for the town golf course

Architectural design

Identifying “the satisfaction of the community”
Push for more state funding for these

Changing population growth
Aging population

New senior – multiuse facility
Funding for new senior center
Community center (including senior center)
Community center with gym, pool, multi-use rooms; a green building
Funding for new community center
Senior and teen centers!

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More uses for public buildings

Public water supply for future and now

Long-term plan for safe water supply

Water costs

Water supply safety

Energy, water and cleaning efficiency

Energy issues

Lack of natural gas in certain neighborhoods

Variety of responsibilities

Need comprehensive plan for facility maintenance across the whole town

Need to effect a plan to combine functions/departments into shared facilities

Creating a workforce to respond efficiently to a larger community

Drainage problems; sewers

Spend more on repairs to water & sewer underground systems

Keep Common grounds in good shape

Band-aid fixes

Fixing roads & sidewalks that have been neglected

Plan to deal with through traffic (commuters & traffic due to surrounding towns)

More sidewalks

More sidewalks on major roads

Poor sidewalk maintenance

Better maintenance & repair plan for roads and sidewalks

Poor road maintenance

Never-ending construction (e.g., Rte. 9 & Speen bridge)

Sidewalks & roads maintained

Work on state funding for road improvement / repair / replace

Continuous road repair

Money for road maintenance and paving

Road maintenance, or lack of

Roads

Improve parking

Better snow control in winter

More local busses

Level set building capacities with town serving emp. skills

Proactive approach to maintenance, not reactive

Plan of maintenance

Maintenance staff that takes pride in their work and the buildings they maintain

Have regular maintenance budget for our buildings

Stop deferred maintenance

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School buildings (heating, boards, resources, facilities
Handicap spaces for Town Hall not maintained
Make Town Hall available to more citizens
Ongoing maintenance budgeted
Preventive maintenance
Funding for building maintenance (upkeep_

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick is a desirable and accessible destination that marshals local and regional partners and resources to solve problems and enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

New England individualism; cultural resistance to cooperate

No regional structure government

Regional services for efficient and affordable

Resources

Lack of regional funding

Lack of funding

Money

State government sticking its nose in

Reaching out to surrounding towns to combine resources

Leadership to identify opportunities for funding or collaboration

Separate town characters

Politics

Shortage of leaders

Risk of self-centered leaders

Towns around function separately, not cooperatively

Town government meets regularly with surrounding towns

Greater government conversation with neighboring towns

Regional collaboration

Regional planning and coordination

Regional forums weak?

Lack of volunteers: same people always doing things

Prioritized vision, consensus to secure funding

Benefits to each town?

Push for green businesses, schools, homes

Natick has one of the best Recreation and Parks departments in the nation

Encourage town business sponsored events

Encourage field trips for schools to Boston Scientific, BJ's, etc.

Need business participation in Town boards

Regional transportation

Coordinate public transit

Coordinate public transportation with neighbor towns

Better mass transit options

Public transits

Public transportation

Accessible public transportation

DRAFT

Nature of public transportation of the future
Better planned development

Divert Rte. 27 traffic from Sherborn; create over pass to avoid Natick Center
Transportation
Resolve & get state funding for Oak Street intersection
Coordinate Rte. 9 traffic with neighbors (planning development)
Improve traffic flow

MBTA funded parking garage
Large garage for MBTA commuter rail stations; mixed use, with housing above

Federal and state grants to fund alternate energy sourcing: Green Natick
Knowledgeable people / person to navigate, apply for resources
Point person for state funding and resources
Lack of knowledge of resources
Education

More communication in general needed for all citizens

Schools: regional high school?

Three Big Ideas

Each small group wrote three big ideas for Natick. They are presented below, clustered for each small group.

- Prize your history and natural resources.
- Build off of existing resources, infrastructure, schools, Town Center, with focus on walkable, bike-able communities.
- Think and work regionally: share services, connections, resources.

- Connect Natick through more waking trails and rail trails as multi-modal corridor.
- Make Natick Center a destination, day and night.
- New high school: focal point for community.

- Build a great 21st century high school: green; multi-use; educationally flexible
- Encourage diversity of housing stock with linkage for other uses: rail trail public access to Lake.
- Become a leader in regional planning, sharing of resources, action.

- Natural resource conservation as a standard practice (water, wastewater, sustainability, green development, etc.)
- Encourage diversity through affordable housing and increased density in downtown.
- Evaluate whether Natick's rules and regulations achieve the vision, and change them as necessary.

- Develop design standards and guidelines for new development to retain and enhance community character
- Solve existing transportation and traffic challenges and consider impact of pending developments on them.
- Pursue regional alliances to create a more sustainable—economic, environment, social—future.

- Solve present and future downtown parking problem to enhance inter-modality downtown, linking rail trail, Route 9, downtown business and downtown rail stop.
- Build community center in downtown for seniors, youth, after school programs, celebrations, job training, adult education.
- Strengthen regional ties and agreements to make government more efficient and leverage regional resources; examples: regional transit authority; job training and adult education with regional educational institutions.

- Encourage public-private partnerships: open space collaboratives; parking; housing and economic development.
- Encourage and maintain high level of committed community involvement.
- Energize the community as a whole to live a more sustainable life: recycling; green development; community gardens; pedestrian friendly.

Participants

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