

Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Public Survey Input Issues and Responses by Focus Areas

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Introduction

Two joint meetings of *Natick 360* sponsoring boards and committees¹ February 12 and 13, 2007—and similar meetings of the Town’s senior staff on February 13 and the public on February 15—generated eight focus areas and a list of issues associated with each focus area. These issues identify gaps between where Natick is today, and Natick’s vision for the future. The focus areas and issues are listed below.

From March 16 to April 10, members of the public had an opportunity to provide preliminary input on solutions to fill these gaps through a web-based survey. The survey was publicized through emails to approximately 600 individuals who have asked to receive updates about the *Natick 360* process. Input was received from 21 members of the public.²

The public’s raw input is shown below³ under each focus area and list of issues. It addresses two questions for each focus area:

- What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?
- What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

Each paragraph represents a comment by a different respondent.

During the same period, members of the five sponsoring boards and committees had an opportunity to provide input to the same questions. Their input is summarized in a different document.

¹ Sponsoring boards and committees are: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Planning Board and School Committee.

² Some respondents did not address all survey items. Nineteen additional individuals logged onto the survey system, but did not respond to any survey items.

³ Responses are reported verbatim, though typographical errors have been corrected.

Improving Public Education

- Level of financial investment in education
- Competition with other town needs
- Community support for educational investment Insufficient, inappropriate and aging facilities
- Recruitment, training, evaluation, retention of teachers
- Unfunded mandates
- Lack of consensus on measures of quality
- Focus on continuing education
- Parental involvement
- Unequal response to student needs (arts, recreation, special needs, college prep, vocational training, etc.)
- Insufficient use of non-school resources (mentoring, tutoring, etc.)
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

1. The town needs to hire a stronger school superintendent to accomplish a better partnership between schools and parents. Better communication with parents. 2. Better communication with the citizens, whether through newspapers or Pegasus, or through forums sponsored by LWV, or education through PTOs/PTAs. I don't think the average citizen has any idea what the issues are with the schools, nor what the budget is and that there is a budget shortfall and how adversely this would affect the educate of their children.

1. Extend the school day. This is a collective bargaining issue and would need to be factored into future contract negotiations. There is incentive money available from the state department of education. The extended school day could be used to enable a number of suggestions outlined in the additional comments below. 2. Add 30 minutes of small group (6-8 student) advisor-lead sessions to the schedule for every study in Middle School and High School (2x per week). This time will be used for mentoring, individual goal setting, social dynamics, etc. 3. Expand the number of elective courses available to students at the Middle School (grades 7-8) and High School level. 4. Start the school day later - 8:30AM for high school students, 8:45 Middle School, 9:00 grade school. 5. Start an early childhood education program (pre-K, ages 2-5) and seek funding from public/private partnership. 6. Implement a Teacher Evaluation process for all classroom staff based on best-practices work of Charlotte Danielson (PRAXIS III). This is a collective bargaining issue. 7. Work with state legislators to shift funding for public education away from property taxes and toward state income tax revenue. Massachusetts ranks 40th out of 50 states in terms of the percentage of K-12 education funded by state revenues. This can be made revenue neutral by reducing local property tax burden proportionate to increase in state income tax burden. 8. Create a transition process that educates staff at the middle school about students who are moving up from the elementary school. Unless a child is on an IEP, there is no information sent to the 5th grade teachers. 9. Invite parent participation and involvement at the Middle School and High School. The cultural difference between the acceptance of parental involvement at the elementary school and the avoidance of it at the Middle School is palpable. 10. Reduce teacher absenteeism by making absenteeism a part of the teacher evaluation process. This is a collective bargaining issue.

1. set the goals 2. set priorities based on goals 3. determine short term vs. long term and evaluate the most that can be achieved with the minimum amount of finance. 4. look for foundations and grants that can help achieve the goals

We can see from the recent skirmish about whether or not to have an override for operating expenses for the schools, that most of the extraordinary costs that went up this year were for things that do not show up in the classroom. Actual improvements in curriculum and reaching for the goal of making the schools equal to other schools in our area is the last thing on the mind of the people doing the budgeting. The town meeting needs to fund Special needs fluctuating budget separately from the School Committees budget. The town meeting should also budget the costs of health insurance and benefits for the schools. The school budget cannot so widely fluctuate. In this sense it would be reasonable to use outside set aside funds for extraordinary increases like we have had this year in special needs costs, things like transportation and health insurance for school employees. The School Committee, volunteers all, should be able to concern themselves with performance of the schools. Education is something which is actually required, not a luxury, like some of the other things that town meeting funds. they should cut for instance 'Recreation department trips to Foxwoods,' and other things which are not mandated by the state, before they cut kindergarten teachers. It is the town meeting which is not pro rating the budget according to requirements set by the state, and comparable to other towns. I think there should be an inventory of town services and practices, which are not essential, and prioritizing the schools first. And then maybe we can tell when we pay more that it will show up in the classroom in terms of increased curriculum expectations, materials, and student success. These deficits we currently see are from increased costs that do not contribute to any improvement but are the status quo.

An override - possibly that exempts senior citizens with low incomes... I think continual improvement in our education system is critical to our community. smaller class size would be the best one thing that could be done. better understanding of different learning styles by teachers with real recognition for those who get it.

The interest of parents is evident with four people running for the two positions on the School Committee. Perhaps this committee could solicit and appoint people to sub-committees whose mandate is to study the above issues. Perhaps solicit corporations in Natick to support a new science lab or such or to support programs. The latter could be with money or with their employees-- perhaps coaching, mentoring or tutoring.

First and foremost - replace the high school. At the high school level - offer a wider selection of electives and more AP choices.

Funding is a crucial issue with an override needed to meet current needs in the schools. Making public the various budgets so that we can see the financial stress as it applies to everyone would be very helpful. As the financial stress increases everyone needs to become involved in the discussion of where we are going to each give a little. *i.e.*: highway dept, police and fire dept school dept elder needs etc. How can we overlap needs to cut costs? *i.e.*: are we building a senior center or a community center that can be used 18 hours a day..

I recommend creating a task force to identify and study other Massachusetts towns that have addressed these issues well that can serve as models of action.

School committee should give us their input, especially with new super. of schools this year. Adequately plan and fund new school buildings.

Suggest active pursuit of MTC Green Schools Initiative, to gain understanding of funds available and program requirements, for any new schools being built. Contact Sam Nutter, 508-870-0312 x1277, nutter@masstech

inventory all school facilities and make a master plan of how long each will last and when it will need renovation or replacement. With knowing the K population, it should be possible to anticipate at least the general shape of the population in the coming decade, of course kids will come and leave, but it will not be a surprise when a bulge and when a small class will be in the pipeline. Use the school buildings as much of the time as possible for programs for all ages so that those without kids in the schools feel invested in and ownership of the schools or at least the facilities. More adult education would be one way to use those facilities. create internship opportunities either during the school days or during vacation times with local businesses for students to get real life exposure to different career options. This should happen at all ages from elementary to high school and perhaps even Natick kids who are in college. Continue to support and create drug and alcohol free spaces for kids to get together for fun and activities. make fun and acceptably cool ways for kids to get more exercise. Serve more good nutrition options and eliminate the truly poor nutrition options in school cafeterias and vending machines. Have the kids in the schools research the food choices and the nutritional values and plan and then implement improved options.

The task is huge, but a well designed task force comprising of School Dept. administration, with key interrelated town department members along with public members from each major age group needs to be created. Now, not every issue can be solved, but a teamwork approach to addressing those common issues can be worked on together. Time line would be of a considerable length (*i.e.*: 12 months plus).

Develop programs to attract the highest quality educators through original compensation systems that go beyond 'more money'. For example develop some sort of housing allowance that can be coordinated with 'affordable housing' programs in Natick Centre or other town areas. This can provide dual benefits since another goal is to enliven Natick Center with a diverse community. Plan/Build a new high school that can be used as a facility for Community training / adult education and / or leased to business in order to be able to generate some kind of revenue. Develop exchange / collaborative programs with some of the neighboring high-ranked educational communities (Wellesley, Weston, Wayland). Develop exchange / collaborative programs with neighboring tertiary institutions (Mass Bay College, Babson, Wellesley College)

Provide meaningful training and involvement opportunities with Town boards and committees for Natick school students; Provide significantly expanded mentoring and civic-engagement opportunities for students; Significantly expand adult education opportunities and citizen use of school facilities so that all citizens of the Town feel connected to the educational system; Develop collaboration activities with other schools such as Walnut Hill and Keefe Tech; Institute regular joint meetings between representatives of the school committee and the board of selectmen; House at least some classes and administrative functions in downtown Natick to engage students more in town activities and contribute to the vitality of downtown; Make smart growth and environmental awareness an important part of the school curriculum and integrate the concepts into school building placement, design and maintenance; Fully engage the schools in the artistic and cultural life of the community; Locate educational facilities to encourage walking; and, Participate in the 'Safe Routes to School' program.

I believe the attitudes from the top need to change to invite engagement of parents and others with new ideas and programs. Money will not provide creativity and good morale that leads to innovative and effective teaching. Schools should be opened to other programs to enrich the students lives and provide a place for them to go after school instead of the Mall. Tax payers paid for the buildings and should be able to use them.

Community Support: Periodically, like other departments do, put a newsletter into an all-town mailing (tax or water bill) updating ALL residents about key issues the school system is facing.

Parental Involvement: Start young! Issues regarding the high school WILL affect parents of young children, yet, they're only looking at the needs now (pre-school or elementary needs). This is the group that needs to 'get on board.' Have representation at their board/PTO/PTA meetings - or make sure they're on the newsletter list. Aging Facilities: The only way these are going to be improved is with an override, which will require educating the public. Forums should be set up (similar to when we did the Wilson override) - with pro/con information.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

No matter how much \$\$ is poured into the schools and increased eligibility of teachers, parents need to play a major role in preparing their children for school and for that matter a productive life. The student is a reflection of the family. If that student comes to school unprepared to spend 6 hours in a structured environment, this affects adversely the learning environment for the other children who are there ready to learn. This is the issue in my daughter's school. The teacher can not teach when they spend too much time disciplining and reprimanding children. In fact, my daughter complains that her class didn't get to do such and such because kids were fooling around. An action that the town can take is to educate the parents of these disruptive children perhaps through parenting workshops run through the schools, the library. And schools need to follow through with consequences of bad behavior.

Educate the public; if you do not have a child in the system, you are unaware of the changes that have occurred over time (such as why so many top administrative posts). If people understood the system, you would not have to work so hard when a challenge

I would suggest getting the teachers unions behind the improvements that parents want in the schools. There is an impression that the business aspects of the teacher's unions are at odds with what parents want. There is no reason that for the 80% of students that are college bound in Natick, that the students are not held up to the standards of the private schools. These students are the college bound, they expect to go to college and yet they are not being prepared on an equal basis with students in private schools. The teachers union has to get behind the academic improvements that college bound parents want, as a matter of philosophy, and the high school principal needs to be given the authority to conduct this. I know this high school principal knows what is good, because his own child's experience at St. Sebastian's. 80% of our students are college bound, and 80% should be treated in this manner. At Xavierian school where my son attends, we have EDLine, a program which allows parent to see how students are progressing in every subject. While my two daughters were at Natick High, I never even received a report card in the mail, and if you made an inquiry about your students progress, the teachers were 'insulted' and not your partner.

It was very encouraging to see so many people in October but we will need much wider participation, being most straight forward about the realities we face may jolt some more people into the discussion

\$\$\$\$ what can taxpayers afford, prioritize in importance.

Current educational practices do not sufficiently engage students in the civic life of the community.
Action: Expand course offerings and student placement with local government and businesses.
Encourage student volunteerism and engagement in local issues.

On a long range view, I would band with other town school systems and address the stranglehold the state has on creativity. The regulations should be reviewed for effectiveness and school systems should be given goals and the freedom to meet them or suffer consequences. Funding should be tied to mandates. Planning for gifted and talented youth should be encouraged.

School board members (and other committees for that matter) need to work as a TEAM. I hope all members go to the MASC orientation meetings (if they even still offer them).

Increasing Civic Engagement and Leadership

- Leadership fatigue
- Appropriateness of the current form of government
- Communications between government and citizens
- Citizen engagement
- Lack of a useful compendium of town information and resources
- Business involvement and leadership
- Lack of coordination, collaboration between boards/committees/town departments
- Town needs to be more welcoming
- Need for better long-range planning
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

In the past 8 years that I've lived here, I've never seen such interest and excitement about this upcoming election (with the exception of the unopposed selectmen). Getting more people to run for office is one of the goals the League of Women Voters has set out for itself. Increasing the relevance, and making it a priority, of the town website and bringing us technically into the 21st century would help increase communication with citizens. Hopefully, if the right town clerk wins at least the Town Clerk website has a chance of becoming a helpful tool in educating and communicating with citizens.

1. Hold regular meetings in each precinct, hosted by current Town Meeting members to educate people about local government and pressing issues. 2. Create a leadership development academy for people who might be interested in exploring election to town-wide board positions 3. Create a campaign tool-kit to make it easy for people to learn how to run a town-wide political campaign 4. Create a listserv or other opt-in email/messaging service to which people can subscribe to get notices about town activities. Perhaps this could be provided by the library.

1. Advertise methods the average citizen can participate who does not have special skills 2. Define the needs without being intimidating 3. Just as there is time to meet with the selectman, perhaps time to meet out employees

Understand and acknowledge the communication gap that exists between the town and its citizens - and put a plan in place to address it Make it a priority to communicate more effectively with all residents Make it a priority to reach out to those who are under-represented in government Make it a priority to communicate regularly (not just once) with people in neighborhoods who are affected by projects, e.g. public works Incorporate a consistent, year-round background message of 'here's how you can be part of your town's affairs' At some point (as citizen engagement begins to ramp up again), encourage each major department and Board to host a semi-annual 'open house' Fix broken communications paths (e.g. board agenda email lists, which appear to be frozen in time) Bring leaders of the town's successful organizations together with the town's elected and appointed leaders to exchange best-practices Invite MathWorks leadership and neighborhood leaders to a town-sponsored summit on the traffic problem; find common ground, seek creative (if imperfect) solutions Develop and publish a 'who to call in town government about...' list -- assume no knowledge of town organizational structure Actively promote town elections EVERYWHERE - window signs at supermarkets, inserts with water bills, more prominent 'Natick votes on...' signs Involve League of Women Voters to host candidate forums before town elections

I would agree it is hard to get information. I would abolish the Pegasus and put all the money into digitizing meeting minutes, getting Unapproved versions put on websites, and then mark the minutes as accepted by the committees when they are approved. Certainly the public would have access at the public library to print things they see there, and perhaps we could get edited video onto the internet. The Pegasus local programming is full of dead space and is deadly boring to watch people hemming and hawing in real time.

It is very difficult for individuals to spend as much time as is necessary to be an active citizen. Perhaps town email notices... a group hub idea would allow for input and updates for more people. It seems we need a more professional approach to town management... select people with more experience and give them more power.

There needs to be more outreach to the community to welcome members to come to Town Meetings and to understand how town government works. There is too much of 'it's who you know – not how it works' in Natick. There needs to be more transparency and accountability in every agency and town department.

The town is facing what society at large is facing: too many demands everywhere. How can we return to the reality we deny that we are in fact INTERDEPENDENT!! this concept comes through religious language best, can we engage all our religious groups, at the base whatever faith or religious group the base is caring for one another. The town has strong religious historical roots, can we begin to mine that treasure

I recommend being more open and welcoming of NEW residents. They have chosen Natick because they feel it will be a good home. They probably have a lot of new ideas and energy. Some of these items have been brought up many times at town meeting and not very much input. think selectmen need input

Quicker meeting notes and summaries posted on website for public. (*i.e.* Selectmen Meeting Minutes.)

Offer free parking downtown, or other similar nominal benefit, to civic volunteers. Ask a Natick IT business to sponsor web updates as a charitable activity. When Tax collector sends out a request for tax, as in my recent vehicle excise tax bill, inform the citizens what these funds are being used for, and how to engage if they have concerns (*e.g.*, pie chart on breakdown of use of funds). Engage high school students to own a portion of the website, to observe meetings, and upload meeting materials to websites. Use Google Docs and Spreadsheets to put the school and town budgets up for everyone to review. (this may exist) develop a town email list that sends out routine communications re: budget, town activities, tradeoffs being considered, etc.

Is there a way for the town to send or deliver a packet about town government and services to each new homeowner and renter. I know the renter part is harder, but perhaps some could be done via the realtors and some done via the filing of deeds at time of transfer. Figure out how to do the equivalent of informational coffees esp. in precinct 1 to get people involved. Perhaps the train station or the gyms near Natick Village are options. Use the website better to put out info about the town. I must confess to not looking at it much as I feel comfortable with the info I have about our town. We need to do active planning about the little open space we have left. I feel that we have taken for granted the undeveloped land assuming it must be protected and therefore not developed rather than just not yet developed.

There needs to be a task force organized of government and community leaders to address and study these areas. Various members at large should also be recruited and welcomed into the process. A key element of this task force is that no one is to bring a personal agenda to the table. Not all issues can be addressed with this 12 plus month process.

Provide significantly enhanced staff support to boards and committees; Install electronic bulletin boards to provide public information on all major transportation and transit routes; Develop a 'Welcome to Natick' package for new residents; Develop a comprehensive guide to volunteer opportunities in the town, available to all but specifically targeted to new residents; Organize a Natick Leadership Committee that would include Town, Business and Agency leadership. The group would meet quarterly and focus on public/private development and improvement strategies for the town; Institute a regularly-scheduled cross-functional meeting of representatives of the major Town boards and committees; Provide meaningful training and involvement opportunities with Town boards and committees for Natick school students; Institute a yearly review by Town boards, committees and departments of the Town's long-range strategic plan; and, Boards and committees don't always work efficiently and effectively singularly or with one another. Encourage group-process training for all boards and committees and for all new members.

Leadership Fatigue: Continue with Pegasus shows about citizen involvement, and educate the public about the commitment to town meeting and other boards. Ask for help from the community. My generation is getting ready to retire, and we need replacements! Current Form of Government: I like the elected town meeting forum. Those elected take the responsibility more seriously than those in an open town meeting - where individuals tend to show up only for a particular interest and then leave. I would consider a change back to the 3-member board of selectmen, which also worked. Perhaps we need a discussion about the pros/cons of a 3-member *vs.* a 5-member board. Communication government/citizens and Citizen Engagement: Again, Town-wide news in town mailings. Perhaps the town clerk could periodically send out via all-town mailing a blurb about running for office. Business Involvement/Leadership: Natick Center Associates is a key component. However, their (my) frustration is that there has been inconsistency in 'being at the table' about issues affecting downtown. Of great concern on my part is the dire need for parking and the slow process in resolving this problem. Main Street also needs an uplift. Look into grants that the town/NCA can collaborate on, as we did for Washington Street. Town More Welcoming: The library has made a concerted effort at customer service by bringing in consultants to address such issues as 'dealing with a difficult patron/client' and 'how to get to yes' type of programs. These programs have proven to be very useful and are ongoing; for supervisors and for staff. Long Range planning: Continue with Natick 360, "Jr." - have a committee look at the results of the Natick 360 and update on a yearly basis.

Develop an improved communication strategy for publicizing town issues, decisions, etc. Establish a Program Management Office to improve coordination among agencies and to establish a project management approach to implementation of the town initiatives Evaluate a mayoral municipality? Assess Pros and Cons?

Our town has a history of leadership by "Father knows best." This burns people out and creates more tension than a more cooperative, broader atmosphere would. I believe Natick needs team building leadership to make involvement more attractive and less territorial.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

Directory of employees with job responsibilities; would be nice to know who to call with concerns Lack of faith in government among residents (this one surprises me and seems to be worsening, 'bleeding' into town from state/federal layers) - key actions involve communicating, inviting participation, demonstrating openness, and demonstrating that participation yields results Isolation of town government from residents Erosion of citizen sense of ownership of the town, and increasing homogenization of MetroWest; gradual ebbing of Natick's identity

The lack of coordination between different departments of the town can only cost us money. It also allows less important aspects of government to compete with essential services on an equal footing. No one can compare apples and oranges, and it seems like each group is out for itself. I realize this is used to an advantage by different groups and is part of the political way things get done, but it does not let citizens compare the value of different parts of our town government. I think it would be useful to know what is essential according to law, and require that town meeting fund these things first. Perhaps architectural plans for a recreation center used by all the town is a short sighted expense, when teachers in the high school have rain leaking in, cold classrooms, and cannot plug in their equipment...if they have it.

Take on most important items, otherwise will loose everyone.

An example for improving communication is the fact that I recently found out about tomorrow's election based on the Banner in Natick Centre (good idea). However, I am not aware of the candidates and/or the hot issues in the election. Seems like there is poor participation / knowledge among the community. Therefore, we need an improved communications strategy. Natick days is an excellent event that provides communication, welcomes people to the town, engages citizens, etc. Please continue this! Need more events like this. Natick 360 is also a great long-range planning initiative. Might want to consider doing undertaking such an initiative every 5 years or so. Can Neighborhood associations be a tool to implement / fund neighborhood-centric projects?

Neither the Town internet resources nor the public-access cable channels have sufficient reach to engage a large segment of the town's population. Action: Investigate improvements to current technological approaches and new technologies that would be more effective in engaging the town's citizens.

For civic engagement - consider a stipend?? Just a thought...

Improving the Natick Environment and the Health of the Population

- Limited access to health care for some residents
- Air pollution
- Milfoil in lakes
- Lack of green building and development standards
- Impact of contaminated lands
- Open space protection for local farms
- Recreational and open space acquisition, preservation and management
- Protection of water supply
- Water, energy conservation
- Alternatives to automotive transportation
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

Pushing through the bike trail will help with the alternative to auto transportation issue.

1. Work with legislators to advocate for health insurance reform so that every family can afford health insurance coverage. 2. Require town sedans (health dept, building dept, etc) to be hybrid vehicles 3. Explore converting town pickup trucks and smaller utility vehicles to biodiesel or natural gas. 4. Contract with Siemens or another energy consulting organization to review all public building energy systems and make recommendations for changes. 5. Increase public access to local water resources by negotiating with the state for additional access points to Lake Cochituate and develop access points to Fiske pond, Pickerel pond, etc. 6. Use signage to highlight access points to natural resources. 7. Create a public process to 'name' neighborhoods and regions of the community and create signage to designate these areas. 8. Create local ordinances regarding installation of low-flow toilets, tankless hot water heaters. 9. Consider generating electricity on a small scale at the Charles River Dam.

Do not know enough or have enough opinions on the issues to respond

I think that these are all issued for the town to think about, and present to Mr. Linsky our state representative. The town can really only invoke zoning and practices. I think that the town planning boards might benefit from hearing from the folks as to what their expectations are, because they have to deal with permissions and laws as they stand. Can someone build something somewhere? the town documents say they can or can't. But perhaps some committees could draw up more subjective guidelines for what gets built, and I am in favor of tearing unproductive things down, if they are properties which are failing, like in default on taxes, or are environmentally unsound, unhealthy, sub standard for living (not up to modern building codes.) I would put something in effect for congested and retail areas like downtown (Natick Center) and some of rt. 135, and South Natick Center. I personally do not know what is legal and fair, just that we are congested from willy-nilly bad development over the ages.

All of the above goals are laudable...Perhaps there can be a partnership with the state to get the funding that would allow for some of these initiatives... esp. alternatives to cars... At this point open space in Natick is rapidly declining. No more large developments should be approved... Our town center offers great opportunity. The town houses being constructed there are wonderful. We need more clustered development around Natick Center. (and more restaurants there!)

The state of our open space and town space is pretty depressing. There is litter everywhere -- on the sides of roads, in the town forest. Trees along the roadways are not pruned -- the gravel pit is an absolute eyesore. How about putting up 'Do Not Litter' signs with fines attached around town. Our town sometimes looks like a trash can for Rte 9 commuters.

Natick should select one or two streets in the downtown, brick them over and make them pedestrian only (See Church Street in Burlington, VT.) There needs to be some effort (in addition to the bike trail) to give the pedestrian and bike rider equal time versus just responding to the businesses who think the only answer is more parking (and therefore more cars, more congestion and an unpleasant downtown experience). If you want people to interact as a community and feel connected to one and other you need to get them out of their cars and houses. Also extend crosswalks to outside of the downtown (example: connect Willow Street across Rte. 27) Increase funds for the garden lady or other individuals who maintain some of the green spaces in Natick (next to downtown Natick T stop for example) I noticed that Natick sometimes puts in greenery to beautify an area, but then does not maintain it (See evergreens planted along Rte. 135 headed towards CVS - they all died probably because no one watered them after they were planted - what a waste)

Again, I would recommend a task force to identify and study other towns with similar issues who have coped successfully and made progress to better such conditions. There's no point in reinventing the wheel. No town is an island, etc.

Interesting, some state and federal government Issues, just spinning wheels will not go any where.

Health care is a basic right in my book. We need to look at the number of people who do not have access and look at the reasons. Knowing how many and what access they need, we can look at options of school based health center at least in the High School; a satellite of the Framingham Community Health Center or another center or a free standing independent center; providing some funding to enable Natick low income residents to access the Framingham Community Health center, be it transportation, direct funding, or other creative options; making sure there is a place in town for people to file applications with the Virtual Gateway to find out what services they are eligible for like food stamps, MassHealth, reduced fee lunch programs, etc. For instance, does Open Door and the Natick Service Council have access to the Virtual Gateway? Finish the bikeway/rail trail. Provide bike lanes on major streets, esp. those on the way to recreational facilities and schools.

A task force of health, environmental, governmental users and maintenance professionals, and Board member involved with planning, open space and zoning needs to be formed. Once again, not all issues can be addressed and members of the public at large need to be involved along with local state and federal agents. This process would be a twelve plus month process at a minimum.

Develop a good public bus route from the train stations (Centre, West) through the town / mall / hospital / schools / etc. with good frequencies. Protect farms while allowing for development in current commercial areas. Foment smart / sound development in commercial areas through incentives / loans to selected industries and green building. Establish partnerships with agencies such as Audubon Society, Trustless of Reservations, etc. to protect green areas. Build more children's play areas / parks and / or improve current ones. Don't know of a children's play area close to Natick centre (walking distance). Assess investments to the MetroWest / Leonard Morse hospital to make it attractive for Doctors and Patients.

Make explicit the connection between a clean environment, recreational and open space, and public health; Begin to change the town fleet to cleaner and more energy-efficient vehicles; Dramatically improve public access to Natick lakes and ponds; Adopt smart growth and green building development standards; Revisit participation in the Community Preservation Act; Encourage, require, the re-use of already developed land before the development of un-developed land; Encourage the development and use of renewable energy whenever possible; Support and preserve local farms and support and expand the Natick Farmers Market; Build on partnerships with existing non-profits such as Mass Audubon and Sudbury Valley Trustees; Develop a long-term plan for the development and preservation of walking and biking trails in the town; and, Do a serious study of current sidewalk access and needs over time.

Air Pollution: All municipal building should use hypoallergenic cleaning products. Milfoil in lakes: There are so many 'experts' out there, that it's tough to decide who to believe. Green Buildings/Development Standards: I would hope that these add points to the RFP system when putting out a request for an RFP on any new building in town. Recreational/Open Space Acquisition, etc: again, the more information the public receives, the better. Alternatives to automotive transportation: A tough one. Consider certain throughways (e.g.: route 27) at peak hours, only available to carpools. Singapore has done this for years and it works.

Do whatever it takes to get rid of the milfoil in the lakes – or we won't have any lakes any more! RE: Lack of green building and development standards: let's start with any standard for development; slow down with the building. The expansion at the mall and 40b housing is enough! Putting in more residential housing will further overwhelm our police & fire depts. and already very busy streets.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

Since the CPA didn't pass, the groups that were spearheading the initiative should regroup and do another re-education. However, there are more pressing issues, such as a new high school, new Kennedy Middle School, new senior center/recreation center, that need to be addressed also. These issues have nothing to do with this topic, but it's hard for some citizens to vote to spend money on something that seems unnecessary and not of an urgent matter. I don't agree by the way. So, basically it became an 'either-or' situation.

Here is something that bugs me. Downtown someone built a brand new bank right where people need space to get out and go to the train, which would have made a good drop off point for commuters. Their friends block the road on South street to pick them up and drop them off and people are crossing the road from everywhere there. Who thought we needed a bank right there? It is attractive, but I think a mistake. And where Pizza market and the Chinese food is across from Natick center. I think that space is the most congested place in town, and someone lets them have parking places in front, even with the 'new' traffic patterns, which, I am afraid just don't work with all the diagonal parking that is allowed downtown. I do not require a parking garage, but I think that they should make those streets around downtown one way to allow for more side street parking, and the town should option any old buildings, not for new business but for the space to accommodate the business we already have there. We should charge these businesses for parking, since they do not provide their own parking or pay to have their lot paved like the owner of a freestanding business might like to do. I think it is kind of greedy that people think someone else should pay for and provide parking for their business.

One item on my wish-list is that Natick would dedicate a small open space (with benches for the owners) as a dog-park. (See enclosed dog park in NYC on upper west side along Riverside Drive) Its another way for people to get out and interact with their neighbors

Make issues we take on able to get hands around, and solve problem.

I think that it is very important to keep clear the town responsibilities / abilities / issues versus those of the state / federal government. Access to universal health care is a federal / state issue. Housing affordability is a state issue. We can address certain of these issues in ways that can benefit the town but our mandate should not be to solve the state or country's problems. MetroWest / Leonard Morse Hospital has insufficient parking. It makes it less convenient to access. Need to ensure parking and / or public transportation.

Natick has not developed any renewable energy sources. Action: Investigate use of wind, hydro, solar power and bio-generation for energy production.

Where is there any concern for our children in this report?

We need an environmental advocate, possibly of celebrity status, to be Natick's spokesperson on these issues. There appears to be some negativity about certain issues because of who is speaking out for/against them.

Enlivening Natick Center

- Insufficient parking
- Insufficient mixed use (housing, commercial, educational, recreational, cultural, etc.)
- Level of vitality (e.g. too few restaurants, destination stores, etc.)
- Level of policing
- Insufficient playgrounds
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

Free parking other than just during Christmas shopping time. Better promotion/advertising of restaurants. Better restaurants. We need more 'hip' clothing and shoe stores. The shoe store in town is dowdy. Too many coffee shops/diners. How about more Bakery on the Common like restaurants. I would prefer to do my shopping in Natick as opposed to Wellesley, but hey, there are so many hip and cool stores and restaurants there and it's even just fun to stroll down Central Street.

1. Issue RFP for private development rights of Natick Center Middlesex Garage as soon as possible.
2. Commit to debt exclusion override to fund a 440 car parking garage if private development rights cannot yield results within 2 years
3. Consider relaxing parking/floor area ratio standards for commercial development in Natick Center - particularly for restaurant/entertainment businesses
4. Relax alcohol licensing requirements to allow for more restaurant/pub development. Create an entertainment venue alcohol license.
5. Create a public/private partnership to attract a grocery to Natick Center to support the growing residential development in this area.
6. Create a public/private partnership to explore a youth drop-in service in close proximity to Natick Center.

1. Playground on the common
2. Need parking - no good suggestion to accomplish this
- 3.

Please read the following page, I did not read ahead here. I am not sure that I would enliven Natick center. I would try to make it better for what we have currently. Their look to be crumbling warehouse buildings and bad housing in the down town area. I think plenty of people live in proximity to downtown, people all around Natick center, walk over from Walnut hill and from the pond street area and from the Sherman street area. There is plenty of housing. I would like to see a Whole Foods store in downtown, behind Main street somewhere, not on it, with its own parking lot, or a Trader Joes. This would be good for people who would not need a bus to get to the market. I am sorry not everyone likes those stores but we already have the others, and I think commuters would appreciate it in proximity to the train

Key here is the increase of housing and good restaurants within walking distance - as I noted on the last page. We can learn from Wellesley Center... Natick Center can draw from Natick, Wayland, Wellesley, Sherborn and Dover. TCAN already does this. A good book store and some restaurants would help. The Common is great as it is... and the concerts in the summer and the ice cream store...

THERE NEEDS TO BE AN INDOOR FARMERS MARKET IN DOWNTOWN NATICK!
How about using some of the warehouse space (with an ample parking lot) in downtown to open an indoor 'farmer's market' that could run year-round -- similar to 'Russo's' in Watertown. It could be stall-based, so that smaller vendors (producers of food, cheese, produce, flowers, maple syrup, bread etc) could participate, but also have some larger experienced anchor vendors such as Lookout Farm and Bacon Street Farm, who could use it as an adjunct to their stores. There is nothing of this kind in MetroWest -- it would draw people from all over the region to downtown Natick. Russo's in Watertown gets people from the entire Boston region, because they appreciate the high quality fresh food they find there.

Seems to me that the parking issue limits all other options for the center... we are going to have to put this on the priority list.. how much of the available parking is locked up for the day by those who work in the center??

I don't know how you attract high-quality small businesses to a Town, but I know Natick needs some to become more vital. There are some great little businesses (Anne Reagan and some of the artists galleries, Five Crows, etc and the Frame Shop), but a good grocer and cafe would be welcome. Bakery on the Common is okay based on its location and comfy interior, but the food is lousy (sorry!). Lola's - a great space, but a wasted one - it could be so much more. I generally am not a fan of chains either, but I think just one Starbucks or Pete's would be nice. How many people from Natick get in their cars each morning to head down to the Starbucks in Wayland and then head back to Natick? I would replace Pizza Plus with a good coffee stop (new construction) with seating to encourage people to stay and socialize. How Pizza Plus passes its health inspections by the Town I'll never know.

TASK FORCE

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ who's going to pay?

Tax incentives to improve upper floors of Natick buildings.

Parking both for local businesses (customers and employees) as well as for the train. Perhaps to have differential rates for residents and others or a limited number of parking spaces for non-residents. Seems we have lots of space downtown for mixed use, but not developed because of lack of parking. A bit wider variety grocer than the present convenience type store and specialty Lola's. Another few restaurants and more stores that are open at night. perhaps a more high end restaurant might help that problem also.

The task force to work towards this issue needs to come from the Natick Center Associates and Community Development. There should be members of public safety agencies, recreation and the public at large on this task force. Any old studies should be brought to the task force and examined. This task force may not need as many months to come to a conclusion as the others.

Develop a list of selected types of commercial venues to establish in Natick Centre (Coffee Shop, Grocery Store, Casual Restaurant / Pub) and establish competitions for town-sponsored loans. This will attract the 'best' stores by making it very attractive. Build more children's play areas / parks and / or improve current ones. Don't know of a children's play area close to Natick centre (walking distance). Establish commuter parking areas (make sure that they are not eye-sore parking structures / plazas!) Implement strong but fair metered parking through automated machines (example are the City of Toronto, Ontario, Canada). This would enable a source of revenue while ensuring commuters people don't park there all day!). Establish an arts-type movie theatre to complement TCAN (not an AMC monster), which will generate more traffic.

Develop a municipal parking garage that enhances the vitality and potential for downtown development rather than merely occupying valuable ground; Build a positive relationship to the Route 9 businesses and the Natick Mall (encourage them to have their customers 'Experience Downtown Natick'); Encourage the development of additional restaurants in downtown Natick - with liquor licenses. Develop mutual promotional efforts between downtown businesses and TCAN; Do everything possible to get a college or university to locate at least some of its activities downtown; House at least some Natick school classes and administrative functions in downtown Natick; Build a playground - and a great fountain; Institute design standards that encourage architectural quality and integrity; Focus high-quality, mixed-income housing in downtown; and, Develop a 'Weekend in Natick' program with tickets to TCAN, discounted restaurant meals, discounts to Natick Mall stores, discounted lodging, entrance to Broadmoor, Mass Horticulture at Elm Bank, etc.

A commitment to at least one program for after school, possibly in the new Center being discussed. A smaller footprint for apartments downtown would provide first time buyers, young professionals and seniors a more affordable chance to live downtown. This smaller size would also not encourage more families with children in need of services.

Insufficient Parking: Having worked for over a year on the DIF Committee, I'd like to see that come back to the table, for parking in downtown. New businesses have approached Natick Center Associates about moving to downtown, with the need for xxx amount of parking. When they hear there's a wait list, they go elsewhere. My other concern – the current businesses in downtown will move on, too (eg: corporate offices of Middlesex Savings Bank now in Westborough). Level of Policing: The negativity toward Natick police/meter person in the past has to be addressed. Many of us have spoken with and written to Sgt. Lauzon and Chief Mannix. Ideally, once we have parking for businesses, I'd love to see no meters in the downtown – making the experience of visiting downtown Natick a welcoming one.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

NO MORE HOUSING ANYWHERE IN NATICK!!!! THERE IS ALREADY TOO MUCH TRAFFIC.

I would like one way streets, with a better traffic flow than we have right now on Main street at Natick center. Too many special things are accommodated, and there is some idea that Slow traffic is better, safer. I don't agree, I think it inspires road rage and people running lights, and blocking intersections. There should be No Left Turn when you leave the Post Office. There should be diagonal parking all around the town square, and none on Main street. There should be no parking in the intersection of Main at the Pizza Market and the Chinese food. Some buildings should be torn

down, and small parking areas could supplement lack of on street parking. Also, the new building at that same location...proposed, should not have any on-street parking, it should all be behind it. If I were on the planning board, I would have said 'if you tear it down, you may only plant trees' I find that spot overly congested with traffic. I know this is unrealistic, then they have no incentive to improve themselves, and that is pretty much eminent domain.

Make sure Planning Board does not approve housing etc. unless they have correct parking

Although Natick Center is pleasant, it doesn't project a unique commitment to quality. Action: Focus on the aesthetics of the area. Develop design, landscaping, signage, infrastructure standards. Include public art and distinctive features that will be demonstrations of pride in the town.

So many of our constituents would like to see a food market and a dress shop in downtown. Again, parking is an issue.

Balancing Town Financial Resources

- Current budget shortfall
 - Revenues are insufficient to maintain current service levels
 - Public perception that revenue from recent developments should be sufficient to cover increased municipal costs
 - Conflict between educational and municipal service needs
 - Proposition 2 ½ limits revenue generation
- Rising costs, e.g., health care costs; energy costs; pension costs
- Conflict between citizen wants and willingness/ability to pay
- Increase charitable giving, support for nonprofits
- Pursuit and use of grant resources
- Level of public safety resources
- Disagreement over distribution of tax burden between businesses and residents
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

1. Change collective bargaining agreements to allow the town to participate in the statewide GIC (health insurance program). 2. Hire additional staff for community development office to pursue economic development, grant, and other leveraged financial activities. 3. Set policies to make sure that every operating override proposed to the public includes funds to mitigate impacts to seniors and low-income families. 4. Organize at the grassroots level in Natick to pressure legislators to reform local aid formulas and to shift burden for funding schools from local property taxes to state income taxes. 5. Shift management of the Town of Natick pension fund to the state pension system. 6. Require all town departments to implement on-line and electronic service delivery to reduce the number of staff needed to provide services. 7. Engage local businesses more aggressively to invest in public private partnerships where opportunities arise - particularly in transportation, recreation, and education.

You have listed the issues well; solutions will take much longer. Need to educate everyone on the need to balance the seniors vs. the young people vs. the workers - we all want everything and we need to compromise and find middle ground

The town meeting should empower Mr. Linsky to help address some of these issues for them at the state level, like the problem of the health care, and pensions for workers. These things are disproportionate, and normal people are not receiving these level of benefits in their private lives. Or regular taxpayers pay more of a contribution. So they resent their taxes going up when they don't have those kind of benefits. I think some effort could go into what would be good use of charitable contributions. Perhaps anything for senior citizens would be a good goal of private charitable money. Supposedly the private clubs like 'Elks' in this town have charity to give away. They could earmark the towns elderly for their charity, in picking up some of the needs for senior programming or facilities.

Pension should definitely be managed by the state.. We need to find a way to simplify the complex financial issues so that people can understand why there is a shortfall. We need to show people the connection between what they pay in taxes and the services they receive. This is a most difficult issue

RAISE THE TAXES ON BUSINESSES IN NATICK. We always hear how they will leave if we do. Nonsense! This is a fabulous location and they will pay the difference. It is hard for me to understand how Natick, with its commercial residents -- and reasonably expensive housing -- cannot meet its budgetary requirements...

Taxes is not a dirty word, it is the means by which we care for one another.. as I mentioned earlier, a comparative layout of the budget as it applies to all departments with the needs and shortfall, and wish lists, and necessities for each would be quite educational and will begin the discussion of what our overall priority list is and the level of sacrifice for one another will have to be

TASK FORCE

This is where new town manager must pull team together. Balanced budget. There is only so much taxpayers of Natick can afford, and so **MUST LIVE WITH IN BUDGET**

Communicate to all citizens clearly if the town needs to raise taxes to meet needs. This can be done.

See earlier suggestion on making budgets openly available, and easy for all to understand, so that the citizens can weigh in on tradeoffs. Wrestle down energy and water inefficiencies...perhaps float a bond for energy efficiency upgrades in all municipal buildings, pay for bond using savings. Drive more energy efficient town vehicles, including for dept leadership.

Prop 2 1/2 should be overturned, but that is a long term and state level problem. Get clear financial information out to all in formats that are understandable, but complete enough to tell the story. We need full discussion, not only in Town Meeting, but also in other public forums, like the media and open meetings at the library, etc. But if that discourse does not lead to answer, then a decision needs to be made and hopefully people will get used to it or change it. (PAYT the former and school bus fees the latter.)

This issue needs to be addressed and spearheaded through the Town Administrator's office with the Town Administrator/Board of Selectmen taking the lead. School Committee and School Administration need to be pivotal players in this discussion with Community Development (Planning/Zoning Boards) closely involved. If overrides are being considered for operational purposes, they should be considered after the scrutinizing of all department operations. Operational overrides should be every other at worse, no back to back.

Evaluate fee for service approaches Clearly communicate impact of funding / not funding initiatives Ensure house assessments are up to date / according to market values (match to recent sales). Benchmark property taxes to neighboring towns with highly rated school systems (Newton, Wellesley, Wayland, Brookline, etc.) and publish findings. (I am certain that there will be gaps). Town should not perform charitable giving / support for nonprofits - The town is a non-profit! Individual residents can do charitable acts.

Without a cooperative atmosphere, there will be competition for money, not compromises and creative planning.

Identify specific state and federal policies that are negatively impacting town finances and develop a sophisticated, persistent lobbying effort to institute change; Always ask how educational and municipal needs may be met jointly, rather than separately; Hire a full-time grant writer and tie the pursuit of grants to a long-range strategic plan; Maintain a strong relationship to all relevant state and federal agencies. Keep apprised of all cooperative and funding opportunities; Organize an economic development staff to encourage, regulate and monitor high-level commercial and business development; Develop a comprehensive guide to volunteer opportunities in the town ; Develop an on-going program to educate Natick citizens on the specifics of municipal finances; Organize a Natick Leadership Committee that would include Town, Business and Agency leadership. The group would meet quarterly and focus on public/private development and improvement strategies for the town; Encourage local businesses to adopt and support parks and recreational resources and nonprofit organizations; and, Identify all Town functions that could be approached regionally.

Current Budget Shortfall: Most town departments were ready to accept the level funding budget. I'm appalled that FinCom "caved" and gave back to departments, especially the schools. Knowing that we'll have to do a \$5 mil override next year, means – start now in educating the public. If you want xxx services, you're going to have to step up to the plate and pay for it. I also hope that we work together on this and not pit one department against the other. Collaborative meetings must start now.

Better disclosure/public relations to the entire Natick community of what the revenue from recent developments is and why it doesn't meet Town budget needs.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

We could convert our high school or part of it to a Charter school. This would be worth looking at least on paper...desperate times requiring desperate measures. Maybe we could have our whole town system be a charter school. We could dispense with having to pay unions, and could have more of an educational philosophy of achievement, rather than what we have now. In the conflict between school and municipal resources, I think that the current formula of the school department being responsible for its own property is a bad idea. The town gets all upset when the school says they cannot use the buildings without paying fees, but the town is stingy about providing for the upkeep of buildings, so the schools keep people out to preserve the buildings. This is from that conflict. It ought to be one town, town meeting paying for buildings, and capital expenses. There is a feeling that the schools are separate 'on their own' and an open hostility toward bringing the schools up to government standards.

How can we help people realize that there isn't a bottomless pit of money and that we are not all entitled to everything we might want??

New Town Manager needed soon

Businesses should definitely bear the cost of infrastructure leveraged. Natick is perceived as a town with 'low taxes' outside of Natick. If we have 'low taxes' we will have less funding. We need to make sure that our taxes are on-par with the level of services expected (cannot do magic). Hence, a good communication strategy / benchmarking is key.

Over reliance on the property tax as the main funding mechanism to fund town services and education. Action: Lobby to change state taxing policy.

Improving the Town's Infrastructure and Transportation Options

- Traffic congestion, including truck traffic
- Lack of regional cooperation
- Lack of sidewalks
- Route 9 acts as a barrier
- Development/use of public buildings; *e.g.*: high school, senior center, youth center, community center, Natick Center garage, etc.
- Public transportation
 - Age and adequacy of infrastructure
 - Natick community public transportation inadequate
- Ongoing upgrade and maintenance: buildings, parks, roads
- Increased accessibility
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

1. Join the MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority 2. Expand the Natick Community Bus service to provide transportation to/from ball fields on weekends. 3. Create an interim capital plan to address issues at the high school until a new high school is queued up in the state reimbursement schedule. 4. Create a program for installation of sidewalks on major arterial roads - particularly connecting the community to Natick Center. Cottage Street, Union Street, North/South Main Street, Speen Street, Eliot Street. 5. Set up a funding mechanism to regularly invest \$2.5 million per year in capital projects including road and building repair. 6. Create a regional bus service to connect Natick, Framingham, and Wellesley. Based on demographic data, this would meet the needs of more than 50% of Natick's workers. 7. Fund and build the rail trail as an alternative transportation corridor between Natick Center and the Mall/Collection.

1. walking trail - would get us from downtown to the mall 2. more sidewalks on at least one side of the street 3.

In terms of public transportation, I would ask, where do people want to go? It seems the current system gets people to the supermarket. This seems to be where they want to go. Other people take the train into Boston. That works too. People do not use public transportation unless it goes all the time, because when you go by public transit, you need to get back that way and if there are no more buses trains etc. you can't return home. For this reason I would like to see more trains to and from Boston. If you were to add anything local, I think it would have to go on main streets, stop very frequently (this disrupts traffic) and terminate at the mall. Probably only teenagers and the elderly would use it. There is not really anywhere to go in Natick. Perhaps the town would just have regular busses and the students could ride them to school, this would take the costs out of the schools. The town I grew up in had public busses, and kids rode them to school.

Perhaps study the idea of a walkover bridge or bridges over Rt. 9.

FIX THE SIDEWALKS AND ROADS!!!!!! The condition of the sidewalks and roads in this town are horrific. It is difficult to ride a bike or take a walk. Our town looks depressed because the roadways look so bad. The workmanship of the DPW leaves a lot to be desired -- things seem to be sloppily and hastily repaired. Why are other towns able to do the jobs right and we can't?

One question I have is how is street repair coordinated with infrastructure repair, seems no sooner is a street redone that some dept digs it up?? must be a huge cost to this As to public transportation there is a gap between some service and broad enough service that people are actually willing to use it.. Do we cut off service too quickly and not wait out the 'gap building time'

The Neighborhood Bus is a great idea and ferries a lot of people from the commuter rail to MathWorks on Rte. 9. To reduce traffic congestion the Town might add some buses for other well-traveled routes or add capacity to the existing routes within Natick

TASK FORCE and reaching beyond our borders to see what others are doing.

Traffic is not going to get any better, keep approving new project with 600 new people jobs traffic, play the game any way you want, we will have traffic. Need New town Manager to prioritize New Town Development

Sidewalks on Cottage Street are long overdue - many people walk this street in danger - fast moving cars.

Need to create safe walkways between the different malls so that teens can move from one to another safely and those without cars can take the bus and then get from one place to another. That includes both shoppers and workers. More public transportation to the train stations so that more people can use that resource without everyone who is not in walking distance having to drive. We need a master plan of which streets and bridges need upgrades and maintenance when and stick to it and not let things slide because they are not yet emergent and we don't feel we have the money now.

Task force in this area would focus on the town's infrastructure and how the town is developed. The ability for people to travel from place to place in town is of major concern. Task force members would need to be from Community Development, Public safety agencies, Planning/Zoning Boards, Schools, Libraries and Recreation. Consider inviting developers and some new residents to this task force also. This is another 12 month plus task force. Not all issues might be solved.

Plan and build a community center with a swimming pool. A town like Natick should have a public pool. This can be a mixed use facility and could be leased out as a source of revenue. Upgrade Natick Centre station to make it a 'destination'; make it handicap accessible. Seek regional cooperation in public transit. Establish commuter parking areas (make sure that they are not eye-sore parking structures / plazas!) Implement strong but fair metered parking through automated machines (example are the City of Toronto, Ontario, Canada). This would enable a source of revenue while ensuring commuters don't park there all day. Seek public / private / neighborhood partnerships for certain infrastructure projects such as sidewalk repair, etc. Provide tax relief and / or some form of funding / benefit to neighborhood associations.

In considering any new project, a long term, multipurpose approach must be a given. How can we use our buildings and resources most efficiently, round the clock, for all ages. Both the new Center, the High School, existing schools and even private buildings can be considered for creative use.

Give very careful consideration to development patterns and impact on traffic. Encourage residential development where most services are immediately available; Develop a long-term plan for the development and preservation of walking and biking trails in the town; Do a serious study of current sidewalk access and needs over time; Encourage the development of all destination businesses *e.g.* grocery stores, pharmacies, financial services, medical services, within close proximity to areas of concentrated residential development; Develop a convenient public transportation link between the Natick Mall and Route 9 businesses and Natick Center; Use the planned development of all new municipal structures *e.g.*: high school, senior center, youth center, community center, Natick Center garage, etc. as opportunities to consider their impact on infrastructure and transportation needs; Engage the state and the MBTA in a serious, long-range discussion of the use of public transportation to enhance the quality of life and development in Natick; Adopt green building and development standards for all new building and infrastructure projects; Expand wireless Internet access throughout the town; and, Always consider accessibility issues, both physical and participatory, in all town projects and activities.

Public Building Use: The Morse Institute Library does not charge municipal or state organizations for use of our meeting space. We charge minimal costs to non-profits and a fair fee to for-profits. I would like to see, across the board, fair rates by all municipal groups. Public Transportation: In the 50s and 60s, we were able to get T bus service from Framingham to Riverside, stopping on Pond Street (by Forest) and again in downtown (at the Common). Why can't this ridership re-start? Natick Bus is vital for many of our seniors and others, and should be maintained, with an increase in hours if necessary. Parking in downtown Natick is in crisis. Unfortunately, the majority of individuals in Natick are not affected by this. However, when storefronts are empty and major businesses close, perhaps this will make people take notice. I'm VERY concerned about the lack of forward movement on a garage – Bring back the DIF Committee.

Re: truck traffic, it is not necessary for dump trucks, car carriers, etc., that are going to Framingham businesses to use a residential road, Speen St., to get to their destination simply because it's more convenient. Close Speen St. to truck traffic and force them to use the nearest state road; Rte. 126.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?
AGAIN, NO MORE HOUSING!!!!

There are no ordinances forcing people to put in sidewalks. A sidewalk need not be concrete, just a path. I think a voluntary awareness program might be helpful here. Dover Rd. where the lady was run over this summer has no sidewalks. People run there too, to the Elm bank, and have to go in the road. folks there have huge front lawns, but do not have a hospitable path for their friends and neighbors to walk, jog, stroll by with a baby carriage. They curse the cars instead. This does not require government to put in sidewalks, just inform these people to include a path for people along the roadway, put it in the zoning when the front lawn is 50 feet or more. Be reasonable if the terrain is too rough for a path. We all know the main streets are busy, and where the town sees a hazard...they should put in sidewalks.

Please maintenance of building should be very important.

Can Neighborhood associations be a tool to implement / fund neighborhood-centric projects?

It's my understanding the MBTA is considering Natick for a garage. Have a forum with them to discuss this, so that everyone is on the same page. Also have forums regarding the regional transportation program for the MetroWest area, to discuss changes that might occur if we go regional.

If reduce truck traffic and congestion in general can be reduced, safer, nicer sidewalks built in residential & busy streets, residents will feel safer and more confident in walking.

Planning for Change and Managing Growth

- Aging of the population: *e.g.*, health, housing, transportation
- Insufficient planning resources
- Inappropriate or insufficient codes and regulations
 - Lack of zoning for small lots and houses
 - Lack of green building and development standards
 - Lack of design standards
- Attracting high-level commercial development
- Loss of “small-town feel”
- Impact of 40B developments
- Public opposition to growth and development
- Improved/increased access to lakes and ponds
- Knowledge of/access to/maintenance of trail system
- Transit-oriented development
- Number and location of play areas for children
- Housing affordability, lack of first-time homebuyer opportunities, lack of affordable rental housing
- Increased tax burden
- Lack of social/ethnic/cultural diversity
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

1. Proactively development master plans for large areas of Natick that could be pursued for future development including Speen Street National Guard site, Natick Army labs site, Natick Industrial Park behind Sherwood plaza, and Tech Circle off of Oak Street, Fairlane Bowling. 2. Develop a strategy to convert Route 9 east of Lake Cochituate into a 'Corporate HQ' corridor to allow development of professional office buildings.

Natick is full of first time home buyer opportunities, it was built with the first time home buyer in mind. You were not supposed to stay your whole life in the ranch homes built in the 50' 60's. You were supposed to move up. Most of the problem in this town is that the people cannot find reasonable move-up homes. For years the schools supported a huge elementary population, and treated them well, and had dwindling high school populations. The challenge is to get family homes in this town that are not unaffordable to middle class people. The other challenge is the cost of fixing the aging homes built in the 50's. They need improvements and they need to be enlarged to accommodate building codes and their compatriot lifestyles. 40 B developments seem unfair to almost everyone, especially since the developers don't have to live by the same rules in those projects. Massachusetts has lost population, has Natick gained population? Does every single person live in their own house now? We live with 4-6 people in our 1200 sq. ft house. Should we subsidize someone else to live in a brand new house? You see how envy gets in there? You can't build somewhere, but these people can. Its odd. I think that people from Boston scientific, and Cognex and MathWorks, the local businesses in town can afford to live here. These people will not be living in 40B housing. There is a lot of rental housing just past the Mall area on route 9 for people who just want to rent an apartment. In Natick there is the huge complex at the West Natick train stop. That is perfect, that is affordable purchase and rental housing.

We should have a town 'festival' that celebrates our differences... and the things we share...

Check feasibility of including a brochure about trails, play areas and parks with a town water brochure, the one that states what metals, etc. are in Natick's water. Do this yearly with the water information. Gradually have the population move over to the town website to get such information.

Fix the sidewalks and roads and trails! STOP ALLOWING RTE. 9 COMMUTERS TO USE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AS SPEEDING CUT-THROUGHS!

TASK FORCE-talk to folks at MIT and Harvard and other schools who have experts in urban and suburban development.

Please 40B are own fault. have had great presentations from good developers, and neighbors killed it, only interested in their needs, and you get what you got. Make your bed sleep in it. Trail system, please \$\$\$\$\$\$ cash flow. Already put money up, that enough for first phase

The planned South Natick Hills development is a joke - it's sad the town can't do something more to ensure a more suitable development is built there.

This task force should be spearheaded through Community Development and associated Boards. Selectmen need to be closely involved in this task force. Any agency, who brings quality of life and educational issues, needs to be involved on this task force at a passive level. Developers, public at large members, who can relate to limited income issues, and new residents to the town are needed on this task force. This task force should run for a 12 plus month period.

Promote cultural / ethnic / social diversity through the promotion of festivals / cultural events. Partnerships with TCAN, the library, schools can be leveraged. Seek to establish a tertiary educational institution (community college, university branch) to attract young / diverse residents Promote architecturally / environmentally sound building through tax incentives / loans. Enforce signage laws.

Expand the professional planning and development staff to meet current and future needs; Organize an economic development staff to encourage, regulate and monitor high-level commercial and business development; Encourage the development of mixed-income housing and affordable housing to meet specific needs, *e.g.* elderly housing, special-needs housing, first-time homeowners, develop at least enough affordable housing to make the town less vulnerable to inappropriate 40B developments; Further integrate the Natick Housing Authority into the Town's objective of providing affordable housing; Develop a community land trust; Develop an inclusionary zoning ordinance to support affordable housing; Develop a long-term plan for the development and preservation of walking and biking trails in the town. Improve descriptions, maps, marking and signage for current trails; Encourage town ethnic festivals; Develop form-based codes and design standards; Develop a transfer of development rights program to encourage the preservation of open space and the development of high-quality, more-dense development where appropriate; and, Encourage the development of additional neighborhood centers with appropriate commercial and transportation options.

Housing permits should be monitored and fall within some general guidelines for future development and planned growth. Encouragement of the development of an over 50 community would be a good planning goal. Schools could also be a source of later learning programs for revenue and social support.

Housing: The condos currently being built within the downtown district are beautiful, but not affordable to the majority of residents. Mixed use can work, and having a range of prices (for condos, apts. and housing) would mean less migration to other, more affordable towns by retirees, service providers and first-time homebuyers. Public Opposition to Growth: Lack of information regarding pros and cons about a development leads to extreme measures. Take the Mabardy property – if residents in the area had thought about the consequences of not going with the over-55 housing, perhaps the project would have gone through. The impact of 40B on this site may very well put a strain on all services in this town. Social/ethnic/cultural diversity: Having grown up in Natick (over 50 years), I actually see a change in the ethnicity of our town – and we have grown to a blue/white collar community. I think TCAN, Walnut Hill and programs at the library have certainly contributed to cultural changes in town, for the positive.

We lost a significant small town feel when the mall expansion was approved. If Natick politicians continue to approve commercial and residential buildings to go through, Natick will no longer be appealing to the middle-income families that currently populate this town. Growth and development does not necessarily have to mean more shopping centers, residential apartment complexes and 40B housing. Continued development of Natick in this manner will put a significant strain on public safety departments, town-wide resources and community services.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

Natick is becoming a town of mega houses or apt/condos. The charm of the town has changed and the needs of each of the above groups is different. The expectations of what is 'owed' also is not the same.

I would expand the building/planning committees with more volunteers, and allow more subjectivity based on guidelines that the committees could come up with. Building codes are ok, sometimes the rules seem unfair to people, but perhaps the committees could be more proactive in suggestions, which are good design standards, good for neighborhoods, good for housing, like accessory apartments are an issue in places, and can make these suggestions as optional, but suggested, and start to shape improvements that way. Perhaps on a voluntary basis we could have more neighborhood associations to suggest ways for new growth, smarter development, and support for the kind of businesses that bring good jobs to our town.

Public opposition, things change and we must change with them, computers great example, must do what's best for all not private little groups.

Housing affordability is a state issue and goes beyond the mandate of the town to fix as an overall problem. The town should look into addressing this issue from a strategic point to improve the overall attractiveness of the town. For example we could selectively address housing affordability for teachers by providing allowances for those that work in Natick schools, this would attract good teachers and thus improving our schools. HOOP seems to be a good idea to address some of the above issues. Promote mixed commercial / residential building in town centre.

When we talk about "getting the word out" on certain considerations, perhaps it has to be through the mail, because a high percentage of Natick residents do not read the local papers.

Leveraging Regional Resources

- Lack of regional coordination, cooperation, and collaboration
 - Minimal or ineffective communication
 - Traffic and transportation
 - Education
 - Public safety and services
 - Planning resources
 - Financial management, *e.g.*, pension administration, health care, purchasing power
 - Natural resources and environmental management
- Lack of town time and resources to commit to resolving regional issues
- Other

What actions do you suggest the town consider to address these issues?

These issues really need to be taken to our state representative Mr. Linsky. These are topics for town meeting to refer to him. Also, our town administrators should be looking for the trends in improvements that they can contribute here, like modernizing, retraining or getting rid of obsolete staff, and upgrading the way the public's business is conducted.

Working with our neighboring towns I think would increase our ability to accomplish a lot of things on this list. I would strongly suggest reaching out to these towns for ways to work together.

Join regional groups that are forming. Just this week I read of a regional group (I forget what) that is charging a fee of \$300. Sounds very reasonable.

There are numerous regional groups addressing environmental sustainability issues -- as a town we need to get aligned with these groups. Sustainability will be the biggest issue facing the town in the years to come.

TASK FORCE

Bring to state/federal level. We can't do everything

May need to partner more with other towns in significant buying areas - power, health care.

Of course we should. we can start with the regional transportation system that has recently been launched in Framingham.

A separate team of two town residents, who are involved within town government, needs to be formed. They would report directly back to the Town Manager or his/her designee. The surrounding towns in the MetroWest area would appoint members also to this committee in an attempt to collaborate on regional issues. Regional government solutions would be discussed, explored and arrived at.

Establish partnerships with neighboring towns. Seek the best of the best in partnerships (Schools with W suburbs, transportation / commercial development with Framingham, etc.). Establish partnerships with conservation agencies (Audubon, Trustless of Reservations, etc.)

Encourage, participate in, regional transportation studies and initiatives; Institute regular meetings of town administrative staff for all adjacent communities; Analyze all Town functions that could be provided on a regional rather than municipal basis; and, Connect walking and biking trails to surrounding towns.

Let's make sure that we have representation at the regional level, and that our representatives actually go to the meetings. MetroWest Growth Management is a perfect example – we are at the table, but we have scrambled for funding for this organization at a time when we should consider contributing more. In fact, their budget wasn't even in the town administrator's initial budget. Short-sighted, at best. Financial management – the negativity regarding our pension fund is an example of a group overseen by no one. Perhaps they should be reporting at town meeting at least once a year, to give an update over their spending. Lack of town time/resources to commit: We MUST take the time, as the MetroWest region becomes an entity to itself, Natick has to be there. Bite the bullet and put monies into the budget.

What other issues can you identify? What actions would you suggest?

Moving regionally requires a great deal of faith because it means less control. The town would need to know what it wants so it would not be pushed to meet someone else's goals.

Sorry I was not very helpful I think what you are doing is wonderful! I am so excited to see this happening in Natick! Thank you!

All town boards should have input on their ideas since they have the information.

Current tax policy puts town into competition with one another to limit some forms of development and encourage others, often to the detriment of the region overall. Action: Work with other municipalities to reform state tax policy, reducing the reliance on the property tax to finance town services and education.