

# Preparing Strategic Options for Natick's Strategic Plan

## INTRODUCTION

During the week of February 12, 2007, representatives of the sponsoring boards and committees, town staff, key informants, and the general public had the opportunity to consider the gaps between the Natick of today and the Natick of tomorrow articulated in the Natick Value and Vision statements. Almost 18 full pages of notes were generated from those meetings (see document \_\_\_\_\_).

The notes were analyzed and eight focus areas were identified:

- Increasing civic engagement and leadership;
- Improving public education;
- Improving the Natick environment and the health of the population;
- Enlivening Natick center;
- Balancing town financial resources;
- Improving the town's infrastructure and transportation options;
- Planning for change and managing growth; and,
- Leveraging regional resources.

The gap statements have been consolidated and reorganized as outstanding issues under each of the focus areas. We are now asking you to give us your ideas about specific actions the Town of Natick may take to address these issues.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Below you will find a list of issues organized under each of the focus areas. Please consider each issue. For some issues you may have ideas about how the town may begin to take action to address them, while for other issues you may choose not to respond.

For issues to which you respond, please provide your recommendations for actions Natick may take to address the issue. Ideally your recommendations will include specific policies, programs and/or projects to implement your suggested strategy. In developing your strategies, please think across focus areas for possible areas of synergy and increased efficiency.

You do not need to only suggest actions for matters that are your Board or Committee's area of responsibility. At this point in the process, please consider all issues. Later in the process, you will convene as a Board or Committee to review specific recommendations, reflecting each of your particular policy-setting responsibilities.

For issues that you wish to address with suggested actions, try to think of three types of actions that may be taken:

- What are small, incremental actions that may be taken to make progress against the issue, understanding that achieving the final result may take many years?

- What is your most creative idea that looks at the issue from a different perspective, perhaps bringing in partners or developing creative funding strategies?
- What solution could the town take to address the issue in a relatively short amount of time?

We are not asking that you recommend three actions for every issue, just that these guidelines be considered as you explore the range of possible actions that may be taken.

Finally, at the end of each Strategic Focus Area, is an “Other” category in which you will have the opportunity to add issues that are not currently on the list. Please suggest actions for these “Other” issues.

For convenience, we have provided the input document as an online survey, which you will find at the Natick 360 website ([www.natick360.org](http://www.natick360.org)). Please complete your list of actions online no later than 5PM on March 28, 2007. Your input, along with all other members of Sponsoring Boards and Committees will be consolidated into a summary document. You will then have an opportunity to meet in joint sessions with members of all Sponsoring Boards and Committees on April 3-5 at 7PM in the School Committee Training Room to review the list of actions.

The results of the joint meetings on April 3-5 will then be consolidated into a Strategic Options Report that will be presented to each individual Sponsoring Board for review and comment. We hope to have all Sponsoring Boards finish reviewing the Strategic Options Report and vote to accept it by May 4, 2007.

The Strategic Options that have been accepted by Sponsoring Boards and Committees will then be priced out by appropriate staff in the various Town departments. The priced-out options will be available for review by Sponsoring Boards and Committees by May 18, 2007. We will then ask Sponsoring Boards and Committees to vote to approve the Strategic Options Report with pricing information by June 1, 2007.

The public will be invited to come to the Strategic Choices Weekend, June 8-10, to express their preference and prioritize for the various strategic options.

## Issues by Focus Areas

- Increasing civic engagement and leadership
  - Leadership fatigue
  - Appropriateness of the current form of government
  - Ineffective communications between government and citizens
  - Uninvolved, uninformed citizenry
  - Lack of a useful compendium of town information and resources
  - Insufficient business involvement and leadership
  - Efforts trump results (too much talking; too few results)
  - Lack of coordination, collaboration between boards/committees/town departments
  - Town is insufficiently welcoming
  - Need for better long-range planning
  - Other
- Improving public education
  - Insufficient financial investment
  - Not all of community supports educational investment
  - Insufficient, inappropriate and aging facilities
  - Recruitment, training, evaluation, retention of teachers
  - Competition with other town needs
  - Unfunded mandates
  - Lack of consensus on measures of quality
  - Insufficient focus on continuing education
  - Insufficient 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
- 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 Natick labs
  - Loss of local farms
  - Protection of water supply
  - Water, energy conservation
  - Insufficient alternatives to automotive transportation
  - Other
- Enlivening Natick center
  - Insufficient parking
  - Insufficient mixed use (housing, commercial, educational, recreational, cultural, etc.)
  - Insufficient vitality (e.g. too few restaurants, destination stores, etc.)
  - Insufficient policing
  - Insufficient playgrounds

- Other
- 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
    - Health care costs
    - Energy costs
    - Pension costs
  - Conflict between citizen wants and willingness/ability to pay
  - Increase charitable giving, support for nonprofits
  - Insufficient pursuit and use of grant resources
  - Public safety resources are insufficient
  - Disagreement over desirability of split tax rate between businesses and residents
  - Other
- Improving the town's infrastructure and transportation options
  - Traffic congestion
  - Lack of regional cooperation
  - Lack of sidewalks
  - Route 9 acts as a barrier
  - Development/use of public buildings
    - High school
    - Senior center
    - Youth center
    - Community center
  - Public transportation
    - No east/west options
    - Aging and inadequate infrastructure
    - Internal public transportation inadequate
  - Ongoing upgrade and maintenance
  - Need for improved physical and social accessibility
  - Other
- Planning for change and managing growth
  - Aging of the population
    - Health
    - Housing
    - Transportation
  - Declining school population
  - Planning and development
    - Insufficient planning resources
    - Inappropriate or insufficient codes and regulations
      - Lack of zoning for small lots and houses

- Lack of green building standards
  - Lack of design standards
- Need to continue to attract high-level commercial development
- Loss of “small-town feel”
- Need to limit development
- Impact of 40B developments
- Public opposition to growth and development
- Open space acquisition
- Improved/increased access to lakes and ponds
- Knowledge of/access to/maintenance of trail system
- Increase transit-oriented housing development
- Lack of green building and development standards
- More play areas for children
- Economic and social diversity
- Housing affordability, lack of first-time homebuyer opportunities, lack of affordable rental housing
- Increased tax burden
- Incomes not keeping up with expenses
- Lack of social/ethnic/cultural diversity
- Other
- Leveraging regional resources
  - Lack of regional coordination/cooperation
  - Minimal or ineffective communication
  - Traffic
  - Education
  - Public safety and services
  - Planning resources
  - Lack of town time and resources to commit to resolving regional issues
  - Other