

# Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



## 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 lists of issues organized under each focus area. 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 ideas for actions Natick might take to address the issue. Ideally your ideas will include specific policies, programs or projects to implement your strategy ideas. In developing your strategies, please think across focus areas for possible areas of synergy and increased efficiency.

You do not need to suggest actions for matters that are only within 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 ideas, reflecting each of your policy-setting responsibilities.

## **DRAFT**

For issues that you wish to address with suggested actions, try to think in three different ways:

- 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 might be taken.

At the end of each Strategic Focus Area, is an “Other” category in which you may add issues that are not already on the list. Please suggest actions for these “Other” issues as well.

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 on-line no later than 5:00 p.m. 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, 4 or 5 at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Training Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Town Hall, to review the action ideas.

After the April 3-5 meeting, the next several key dates are:

- May 4: Sponsoring Boards and Committees review the consolidated Strategic Options Report, and consider accepting it by vote.
- May 18: Town staff develop costs associated with the Strategic Options items.
- June 1: Sponsoring Boards and Committees review the cost information, and consider accepting it by vote.
- June 8-10: Strategic Choices Weekend, where members of the public will express their Strategic Choices.

After the Strategic Choices Weekend, a scientific sample survey will solicit opinions of the Natick population as a whole.

## **Issues by Focus Areas**

### **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

### **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

### **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

### **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

### **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

### **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

## **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

## **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