

Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.

Natick Value and Vision Statements Proposed Draft, Ver. 1, November 29, 2006



Preface

Over 325 Natick residents shared their values and vision for the Town during 20 facilitated small-group discussions at the Vision for the Future Weekend in late October. In this context:

- “Value” refers to aspects or characteristics of Natick that are so highly regarded that residents would not want to lose them, regardless of the external pressures that may affect the Town; they are things that the Town would want to see preserved over time. Value statements should be able to stand the test of time, maintaining their relevance across decades.
- “Vision” statements describe how residents want the Town to be, to be known as, or to feel like. In some cases, they refer to aspects or characteristics of Natick that residents would like to see changed, emphasized, accelerated or improved over the next 20 years or so.

During November 13-16, 2006, a panel of the public and representatives of the five Boards and Committees who sponsor the Natick 360 strategic planning process reviewed summaries of values and vision materials from the workshops. The purposes of these reviews were:

- To share the information among the participating members;
- To identify what stands out as important in the materials; and
- To write values statements and vision statements for the Town based on the important ideas in the workshop materials.

The five sponsoring Boards and Committees are: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee Planning Board and School Committee. An additional session was open to public participation. Transcripts of the notes from these facilitated sessions are available at the Natick 360 project web site, www.Natick360.org.

This document proposes a consolidated set of value statements and vision statements for consideration by the five Boards and Committees. The independent facilitators developed these statements based on the content discussed at the November 13-16 sessions. Participants in these sessions will be asked to review and comment on these statements before they are made available for public review and comment.

Members of the five sponsoring Boards and Committees will discuss these proposed statements December 11-14, and will consider accepting them more formally at a later meeting.

Natick 360

The Natick 360 strategic planning process is a citizen-driven approach to creating a long-range plan for the Town of Natick. It is organized into four phases:

1. *Our Community Yesterday and Today* report by MAPC.
2. *Our Shared Vision for the Future*, with community workshops, Oct. 27-29, 2006, to develop Values and Vision statements for the Town.
3. *Our Strategic Options*, organized around focus areas and alternative scenarios, with policies, programs and projects, and associated costs.
4. *Our Strategic Choices*, with community workshops, May 18-20, 2007 and a scientific sample survey in June 2007.

The Fall 2007 Town Meeting will consider adopting the final strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Oversight Committee directs the process: Craig Ross and David Parish, Co-Chairs, Rosemary Driscoll, Terri Evans, John Heerwagen, Matthew Gardner, George Richards, Harlee Strauss and Fred Witte. Blackerby Associates, independent consultants, manages and facilitates the process.

Value Statements

Sense of Community

Natick residents value their sense of community and small-town feel, resulting from interconnections throughout all aspects of Town life. Residents are nice and friendly, and connect with each other across a wide spectrum of backgrounds through the Town's volunteer-based representative government, schools and educational programs, events and day-to-day activities.

Affordability

Natick residents value and preserve its affordability across a wide range of economic levels. Natick's affordability helps to preserve its socio-economic diversity and the ability of people of different economic means to participate fully in society.

Diversity

The diversity of Natick's citizenry is a core strength. Natick residents accept and value differences among themselves in terms of socio-economic position, age, political outlook, religion, national origin, culture, ethnicity and race, regardless whether they are Natick natives, long-term residents or newcomers. Interconnections among people of different backgrounds strengthen the Town's social, governmental, economic and business environments.

Education

Natick residents value educational excellence in their schools, meeting the individual needs of all learners. Natick public schools strive for excellence through a culture of continuous improvement involving parents, teachers, administrators and policy-makers, strong curriculum content in diverse course offerings delivered by highly-effective teachers, a constructive educational environment, and Town-wide pride in the schools' academic, sports and extracurricular programs.

Government and Participation

Natick's volunteer-based, representative Town Meeting form of government is an effective framework for residents to address and resolve issues facing the Town. It instills a sense of community and ownership, with opportunities for all residents, regardless of background, to engage each other with respect, and to affect issues that concern them. It is open, accessible, accountable, transparent, representative, communicative and financially stable.

Natick is a safe community, where crime is rare and adults feel their children are safe playing in their neighborhoods.

Natick Center

Natick Center is a vibrant focal point for community activities, arts and cultural activities, commerce, housing and transit. It preserves Natick’s small-town feel and historical heritage through the Common, compatible architecture, diverse locally-owned businesses and burgeoning arts and entertainment communities.

Neighborhoods

Natick residents value living in identifiable, cohesive neighborhoods that are interconnected by sidewalks, trails and bike paths. These neighborhoods are the basis for Town organization, scaled to fit the needs of children and families, with open spaces and nearby schools.

Open Space

Natick residents value abundant open spaces reflecting its diverse geography, with clean-water lakes, forests, open fields, farms and parks. Residents enjoy these spaces in a variety of ways ranging from individual meditation to family outings to organized recreational activities.

Natick protects the source of its drinking water, its groundwater aquifer and recharging surface water systems, as its most valuable natural resources.

Vision

Sense of Community, Interconnectedness

Natick continues to extend its sense of community, small-town feel and commitment to diversity:

- Citizens across a wide spectrum of backgrounds continue to interconnect through the Town's volunteer-based representative government, educational programs, libraries, activities and events.
- Children continue to connect with each other through schools, along neighborhood sidewalks, in parks, and through diverse cultural, recreational and sports activities and events.
- Neighborhoods and open spaces connect to each other, to Natick Center and to other commercial and recreational facilities through diverse transportation networks, including sidewalks, trails, bike paths, transit and roads.
- Natick connects with its neighboring cities and towns, through networks of transit, roads, highways and rails, and through cooperative efforts to find regional solutions to common issues.
- Residents in new high-rise, condominium and apartment communities are welcomed to participate fully in Town government and other volunteer activities, cultural events and public services.

Affordability

Natick continues to be affordable across a wide range of economic levels, including young adults and families establishing first homes, Town service employees, and seniors who wish to remain in their homes. Natick's extends its affordability to its local tax rates, governmental services, variety of housing choices at multiple cost levels, diverse and competitive business environment and range of local and regional employment options. Natick's affordability helps to preserve its socio-economic diversity and the ability of people of different economic means to participate fully in society.

Education

Natick will be the home of America's finest public schools. Education will become the Town's top priority, and Natick will provide educational excellence in meeting the diverse needs and learning styles of students at all levels. It will achieve world-class results and deliver high educational value for money spent by retaining and recruiting the most qualified and effective teachers, strengthening its curriculum, broadening its course offerings, emphasizing critical thinking, increasing integration with the greater Natick community, integrating state-of-the-art technology and creating modern and functional environments that contribute to effective learning.

Natick residents recognize the need for modern and functional school facilities that contribute to effective learning, and provide appropriate resources to meet these needs. School administrators manage and maintain school facilities to optimize their use and operational lifespan, and make school facilities available to compatible community uses.

Development, Housing, Planning and Growth

Natick continues to be a community of communities. It controls the character of its growth by emphasizing small, mixed-use, community cores providing basic services to neighborhoods within effective walking and biking distances, and linking these cores to each other and to Natick Center through networks of trails, bike paths and roads. Natick works proactively and cooperatively with developers to implement this vision, and to mitigate the impacts of development on transportation systems, natural resources, the environment and the Town's fiscal stability.

Natick meets the housing needs of key populations by accommodating options for people of limited means, young families, Town employees and seniors, using available development controls to encourage a wide range of housing choices in appropriate locations, including single-family homes, condominiums, apartments, retirement centers and assisted living facilities.

Economic Development

Natick continues to develop its diverse economic base, with local businesses, entrepreneurial start-ups, national chains, government facilities, major employers and others who bring a wide variety of local employment and share Natick's "sense of community."

Government

The Town of Natick becomes more representative and responsive to a wider diversity of its citizens, to increase the already-high level of participation in public affairs, by expanding and improving communications channels, making access to government financial information and public services easier and facilitating volunteerism opportunities.

Natick fosters innovative strategies to reduce the cost of basic governmental functions, reducing or eliminating fees when appropriate, and using tax revenues to support goals that benefit Town residents at-large.

Natick develops and maintains pro-active, long-range master plans for affordability, public finance, land use, economic development, transportation and traffic, and engages professional expertise to support those planning efforts.

Natick continues to work with other local governments and state agencies in developing regional solutions to transportation, transit, right-of-way, land banking, health care and other issues of common concern.

Natick invests in public infrastructure to support its priority commitments to education, seniors and Natick Center economic development.

Natick Center

Natick Center is a vibrant, beautifully renovated and maintained, primary hub for government, community activities, local commerce, dense housing options, transit, arts, culture and entertainment. Activities on the Common interact with shopping, commerce and public services during the day, while arts and cultural events support restaurants and entertainment venues on weekends and in evenings. Effective use of walking and biking paths, local and metro transit and parking facilities reduce the need for automobile traffic in Natick Center.

Open Space, Environment, Water and Energy

Natick supports comprehensive and responsible stewardship of its natural resources, including its open spaces, forests and trees, farms, parks, lakes, aquifer and views; Natick adopts policies and practices to reduce pollution of air and water, increase energy independence and support preservation of available open spaces within the Town.

Public Health

Natick adopts a community-wide commitment to good health, diet and wellness, and freedom from substance abuse and domestic violence. Natick's hospital serves the Town's general medical and emergency needs, with seamless connections to nearby regional specialty facilities.

Senior Center

Natick fulfills its commitment to its growing population of seniors by building a senior center that serves diverse community needs, with convenient access to transit, library, Town Hall and other amenities.

Transportation

Natick has efficient transportation systems that increase connections among residents, reduce dependence on automobiles and make getting around town easier:

- Sidewalks connect neighbors with each other, and link neighborhoods together and to schools.
- Walking trails and bike paths connect open spaces, recreational venues, shopping areas, schools and community cores together, and link them all to Natick Center.
- Local transit serves seniors, teens and others by connecting shopping, entertainment and recreational areas, government facilities, schools and community cores.
- Shuttles connect transit systems to major employers.
- Regional transit provides access to regional medical facilities, to other town centers and to Boston employment and entertainment centers.
- Commercial traffic linking neighboring towns through Natick is channeled into a designated throughway, freeing up road capacity for local traffic.