

Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Values and Vision Statements Conservation Commission Subcommittee

Preface

The Vision for the Future Weekend workshops, October 27-29, 2006, included 20 facilitated small-group discussions that generated 55 pages of transcribed easel pad notes. The project manager consolidated these notes around values and vision elements, eliminated duplication of ideas, tracked the number of small groups that mentioned each topic, and grouped the ideas around about a dozen general topics. This consolidation and condensation process resulted in an 11 page document.

During November 13-16, 2006, a panel of the public and representatives of the five Boards and Commissions who sponsor the Natick 360 strategic planning process reviewed the 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. A session open to the public was also held; five members of the public participated.

This document contains unedited transcripts of the facilitated meeting of a designated subcommittee of the Conservation Commission, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., November 15, 2006, in the meeting room at Kennedy Senior Center. The meeting was a posted study session, open to the public, with no formal votes or decisions. Members present included: Matthew Gardner, Chair, George Bain and Kathy Rehl; no subcommittee members were absent. A member of the public was also present. Facilitators were Phillip Blackerby and Kevin O'Sullivan of Blackerby Associates.

The information in these notes will be combined with materials from the public session and the other four sponsoring Boards and Commissions, to generate a set of proposed values statements and vision statements that all the sponsors can support. Members 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.

What We Want To Preserve...

Natick Center – preserve or develop it in a way that reflects the historic, small town feel. It can be a focal point for activities. Services, libraries, arts – Natick “Center” (gravitational pull).

- The Center represents the small town historic feel. Embodies that feel/idea.
- We actually moved here, to get away from that Small Town Feel. Natick lets you be involved, or not! I like to do my own thing, value my privacy, and be involved when I want.
 - Individuality
 - Community
 - Choice
 - More tolerant?

More and easier access to Boston’s cultural activities.

I spent many years in Needham. Its downtown is/was in better physical shape than Natick’s. There are good buildings in Natick downtown – But we better be careful to preserve those structures. The stained glass is gorgeous. But – how do we maintain/preserve?

Other towns – sub rosa commentary – more tolerant, diverse, comfortable here. We need to keep this. Maintain tolerance with diversity. Groups – Newcomers, Middle Newcomers, Natives. I was welcomed as a newcomer, regaled with the stories about the town. I was welcomed with candidness. New England is not a “welcoming” place, but once you meet people, they are pretty genuine.

Diversity – Population and economic base. Geographic diversity (Mall, open space and farms, multiple “systems.”) Major companies, expensive estates. Diversity is a strength. Inclusiveness – I was able to get involved (as a newcomer) very easily.

Size of the town – “Right Sizing.” What would be the right size? Water resources? Well water capacity? Housing stock? The size of the town relates to the feel of tolerance and anonymity. If it were much bigger, does that lead too quickly to claustrophobia? Too much?

Local control (autonomy) over development -- ???

The form of government – Residents need to have a say, to retain control. There’s a deeply committed cadre of citizens with a high sense of ownership, commitment, connectedness and attachment. This is a Core Cadre – active, dynamic (depending on the issue, it will expand or contract).

The form of government – People have no compunction or hesitancy re: going in front of the Board of Selectmen. It’s quite a show!

The presence of a significant number of private schools lends to and enhances the “artsy” feel – worth preserving. Arts, Visual and Performing, Sports, Libraries. Arts, Culture, Recreation – it’s a well rounded town. It seems the private schools link to that. Walnut Hill School puts on incredible shows. Link to TCAN.

Education. Strong Special Ed, expansive curriculum. Preserve what we have there.

Preserve existing farms as working farms.

Safety – Physical safety / Crime. We rarely lock our houses. No part of Natick I wouldn't go to. (Traffic, however is another issue!) And in nearby towns, it's completely different.

- The Police department makes an effort to communicate – outreach.
- We have a first rate Fire Department.

Open Space – One important reason for this preservation concept is drinking water. Open space and wetlands; protecting the aquifer system providing our drinking water gives us great leverage (vs. MWRA).

Winona Farm and llamas. This is hugely valuable, beautiful – walking trails. Preserving farms – physical beauty of town maintains certain density – more open spaces, fewer houses.

Preserve open space and drive smart growth and development: clusters, mixed use, transit-oriented. All prime for Natick Center, and also South Natick.

The form of open space – diverse – NOT all football and soccer fields, but includes lakes, fields, farm, trails, etc. Lake Cochituate is a unique asset.

Labs and Lakes – (sediment / historical)

The lakes system – Morse, Dug, Lower, Pickerel, Sunk Away Pond. Natick has a lot of wetlands.

Vision

Natick will ...

Have a vibrant, maintained, beautifully renovated downtown – a mix of businesses, housing, etc. (Physical aspect of the vision)

- Downtown – Farmer's market, concerts on the common. To achieve this vision, we must address PARKING. "I avoid the downtown because there is no parking."
- Pull the cars out of the downtown. Natick is in desperate need of a comprehensive traffic assessment.

Without expanding Rt 27 or Speen Street, the traffic goes where it can be handled. This will be more important with new development. Route 9, the Mall – I can't get out of my driveway. Channel the traffic – discourage cutting through the Center.

Have a Mixture. As the development evolves, pay attention to traffic "channels."

Communication of what's going on in the town. Voting at Town Meeting, newsletters in tax bills.

High level of participation on local affairs. We would have a local cable company providing a local government channel, broadcasting Board and Committee meetings. Visible. We have a way of explaining New England town government form, town meetings, etc.

Green, responsible, mobility strategies. Smart growth provides an opportunity to pull this all together. Natick can be recognized as a leader in this regard.

Affordable housing in (mixed –use) clusters, depending on where it goes. Nothing mixed use about 300 garden apartments. There need to be guidelines (Design Review Board).

Coupled with diverse economic base, employers, businesses. Economic development strategy. (Note – there are some dynamite underused parts of Route 9.)

Also – retirement community, assisted living facilities.

Natick will be less dependent on cars. Sidewalks. We have to be able to cross Route 9, all the way over to the Town Forest. Expanded regional transportation. We can take the bus to the train, to the Mall.

Have automobile-independent ways to link nodes in the town:

- Shuttles
- Buses to the Mall
- Bus to the train.
- Reverse commuter buses
- Rail Trail – connecting neighborhoods
- Safely – walk/ride, non-car. Here to the Mall and farther.

Existing farms will still be operating as working farms.

Natick will have adopted code, policy and practices for energy independence. Green municipal buildings. Municipal trucks on biodiesel. Tax incentives for residences. Town is committed to energy stewardship.

Natick High School touts a 12:1 Student/Teacher ratio. But each teacher has such a student load! NHS will have a Student/teacher ratio that will enable/support greater involvement with students, teachers, parents. Personal relationships.

- Visual and performing arts – a much greater Public School focus.
- Schools are aligned with and supporting and teaching environmental responsibility.
- Schools have truly adopted teaching to a wide variety of learning styles, including appropriate discipline and measurement systems. (Kids are pulled and sent to St. Joe's / Needham, where they are getting grades, rather than fuzzy reports.)

There is a new green High School, and we're not just taking paint!

A good consistent maintenance program to optimize/extend the lifetime of schools, roads, infrastructure, Town-wide.

Natick will continue the diversity of open space and natural resources. More of it protected and preserved, and appropriately maintained.

Trees – We have an ordinance! We protect them. We replace them, not just the scenic ways. We have a comprehensive natural resources protection mindset.

Natick has a comprehensive, codified set of rules to protect its resources – grass, water, trees, etc. (XeriscapingTM)

- Building code should support the use of grey water.
- Underground utilities (“the absence of a vision!”) – get rid of the “vestigial” poles!

Natick has an intergenerational community center.

- A pool? Yes.
- Downtown? Perhaps right here (at the existing Kennedy Senior Center)?
 - It must be convenient for Seniors. This is a great location.
 - Linked to transportation.

Feedback –

Positive – It was good to see the breadth of the input – all the “semi-digested” data.

Change – Tell me what to do with the documents ahead of time

Change – Relate to us what is being discussed/considered at other meetings and groups

¹“Xeriscape” is a trademark of Denver Water.