

# NATICK 2030+ COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

## Natick Center Outreach Meeting

MARCH 2, 2017 - COMMON STREET SPIRITUAL CENTER

# Meeting Notes

After presentations about the Natick 2030+ Master Plan process, town staff and consultants from Crosby, Schlessinger and Smallridge posed questions to the audience. Responses are cataloged below:

### 1. Question: What are the largest impediments to continued revitalization in Natick Center?

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- ‡ *Natick doesn't control enough land to make changes;*
- ‡ *Traffic congestion on main roads (Routes 27 & 135, Speen and Pond Streets) forces too many drivers through residential neighborhoods;*
- ‡ *Lack of sidewalks in the Center, especially around North Main Street;*
- ‡ *Lack of lighting near crosswalks on North Main Street, particularly around Pizza Plus and railroad bridge;*
- ‡ *Lack of good-quality signage for public and private properties;*
- ‡ *Amount of snow on sidewalks by intersections;*
- ‡ *Lack of child-friendly public spaces / infrastructure in Center, particularly around the Common. Area needs more playgrounds, picnic tables, water features, etc. that children can (and want) to use;*
- ‡ *Public restroom signage – more public wayfinding signs to attractions and services;*
- ‡ *Lack of complimentary retail spaces – existing commercial spaces in Center need to be better utilized;*

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- ‡ *The town needs to develop a “reason for being” for the Center. Consider bold, long-term investments, such as roofing Main Street and building underground parking garages;*
- ‡ *Natick should consider adopting the Community Preservation Act and participate in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s Historic Heritage Program;*
- ‡ *Natick Center’s cultural identity is as important as practical daily concerns. Embrace the area’s history, local culture and environmental heritage;*
- ‡ *Maintain critical mass of commercial uses in the Center – don’t convert too much upper floor space into residential uses. Office and service uses critical for ground-floor shops and restaurants.*

### 2. Question: What zoning issues should be considered/addressed in Natick 2030+?

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- ‡ *Building height – encourage appropriate height in Natick Center to preserve a critical mass of downtown commercial space and business uses;*
- ‡ *Strike the “correct” ratio of retail/office/service/housing space in Natick’s zoning by-law;*
- ‡ *Adopt increased parking requirements for new commercial project – there is not enough parking in the Center for daytime office uses;*
- ‡ *Encourage change of uses in existing commercial properties, make it easy to convert older commercial/industrial spaces into new uses;*
- ‡ *Encourage more restaurants and parking;*
- ‡ *Natick’s time has come – pieces have come together. Revise zoning by-laws to foster appropriate development in the right locations to enhance Natick’s character and communal spirit;*

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### 3. Question: Should more housing be encouraged to develop in Natick Center?

- ‡ *More small, affordable homes should be developed for people over 50 in the Center;*
- ‡ *More affordable homes, including “small” and “tiny” homes are needed in the Center and throughout the Town;*
- ‡ *Consider what types of housing can be accommodated well in the Center versus other parts of town;*
- ‡ *Natick Center has a walking problem, not a parking problem;*
- ‡ *Supply of upper floor commercial space for offices and service providers needs to be maintained to help eateries and retailers at ground level; this requires day time parking;*

### 4. Question: Are there any infrastructure improvements that would help with programming events in the Center?

- ‡ *Improve Natick Center Commuter Rail station;*
- ‡ *Consider developing air rights over Commuter Rail line;*
- ‡ *Improve sidewalks around Natick Center;*
- ‡ *Improve public signage to make Center more friendly to pedestrians;*
- ‡ *Recognize the importance of pedestrians to the vitality of Natick Center;*
- ‡ *Town needs to coordinate short and long-term goals of different stakeholders: business owners, landlords and residents;*

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5. Question: What types of businesses and land uses are lacking in the Center? Why are they lacking? What can the Town do to attract them?

- ‡ *Butcher shop;*
- ‡ *Grocery store (Trader Joe's);*
- ‡ *Independently-owned businesses;*
- ‡ *Wide range of restaurants (ethnic, affordable and serving fresh/healthy fare);*
- ‡ *More retail shops;*

6. Question: How can the Natick 2030+ Master Plan be most helpful to business and property owners in Natick Center?

- ‡ *Recommend actions to maintain/enhance the Center's unique character, encourage walkable, sensitive revitalization (maintain 50'-60' height limits);*
- ‡ *Boost Natick Center's visibility, many new residents and visitors don't know of its existence;*
- ‡ *Recommend improvements that will provide people a reason to hang out and linger (constructively) in Natick Center;*
- ‡ *Encourage at least one pub and/or food trucks in the Center;*
- ‡ *Recommend comprehensive upgrades to the Common – consider converting the southern quadrant into a paved plaza with seating, tables, games, etc;*
- ‡ *Recommend zoning techniques and strategic improvements to preserve the Center's authenticity, uniqueness and creative value and encourage people to "Play and Stay" in the area;*
- ‡ *Recommend zoning revisions to allow/encourage boutique hotel to locate in the Center;*

STAPLES  
stickies  
marker holder  
restickable easel pad  
Item# 573751

# ① Biggest Impediment to Center Revitalization?

- The Town - doesn't control enough land to make changes
- Potential parking options - town mtg, approp. funds for study on Middlesex Ave site
- Traffic congestion 135, 27, Speer, Pond - detour thru neighborhoods
- Sidewalks - North Main Street
- Lighting by Xwalks North Main by Pizza Plus  $\hat{=}$  by littlebridge
- Better signage - change signage reqs
- Snow on sidewalks at intersections
- More kid friendly - playground, picnic tables, splash pond (common)
- Public restroom signage - town starting wayfinding program
- Need complementary retail - better utilization of existing space
- Roof over Main/Washington  $\hat{=}$  Put pky underground
- Town needs reason for being
- Need Community Preservation Act
- MAPE Historic Heritage Program

- Community as important as day to day
  - 1 history & local cultural
  - 2 environmental culture
- Must maintain critical mass  $\rightarrow$  including upstairs. Worry about too much hsq upstairs

## 2. Zoning Changes

- Building height
- What's correct ratio hsq/retail/office
- Need higher parking requirements
- Make easier to change/convert use
- Town Center needs more restaurants & more parking
- It's Natick's time - pieces have come together

## 3. More Hsq in the Center?

- smaller, reasonable \$ for over 50
- affordable hsq needed, tiny houses (thru out town)
- What can be accommodated in Center & what other areas
- Walking problem not ~~be~~ parking problem
- Need upstairs offices & that requires parking

## 4. Other Infrastructure Improvements?

- Commuter Rail station being rebuilt to be accessible & will connect to Cochituate Rail Trail
- Should look at building over tracks
- Xwalk improvements
- Signage re pedestrian friendly zone

- Cite green community awards → peds are important

- Need to coordinate goals of property owners, landlords, business owners & residents

Uses wanted?

- Meat store
- Grocery store
- Trader Joe's
- Independently owned businesses
- Variety of restaurants - ethnic, affordable, fresh, healthy
- more retail

How can Plan be most helpful?

- Maintain character. Keep existing height. Close walkable but sensitive revitalization
- Let people know Natick Center exists.
- Reasons to hang out in Center
- Need a pub. Food trucks.
- Common neglected for years. Patio on south end could house tables, events.
- Preserve authenticity, uniqueness, create value  
Needs to become destination: play & stay

• Boutique hotel