



The following summary came directly from notes taken during the individual breakout groups and is not a detailed summary of all discussions.

JUNE 14, 2017 COMMUNITY MEETING BREAK-OUT GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY

COMMUNITY CHARACTER, HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BREAK-OUT GROUP

Community Character

- Is Natick Center thriving? Can it?
 - Should fostering a thriving Natick Center be a goal?
- Need to also focus on other parts of the town
- People want to live, work, and age in Natick
- Tension between “thriving”, “density”, and “character”
 - The town wants to be “thriving,” but not overly dense
 - Keep a cohesiveness between neighborhoods
- Tension between “tear downs” and “neighborhood character”
- Maintaining character refers to neighborhoods, not just the town center
- Design & scale speak to aesthetics
- Continue to have events and locations that draw people together (ex. Farmer’s market) - “Collisions” of people
- Want active involvement in the community
- Group 2 had general agreement with the goals

Housing

- General agreement with Housing goals regarding mix of options, prices and senior housing
- Want barrier-free housing in Natick Center
- Want net-zero energy housing
- Some disagreement with “survey respondents want more single-family housing, but this housing typically has the highest impact on town facilities and services, particularly schools, and is in conflict with the desire to promote and preserve farmland and agricultural land and create more open space” – Some people thought that higher

density apartments are more taxing on town services; many more people using more town services (also some comments that high-density apartments are not aesthetically pleasing and don't balance well with open space).

- Concern that there is "no mention of single family housing" in the Housing Goals
- Others expressed strong support for multi-family housing as a way to create more housing, use less land, and concentrate housing near services
- Add "Balanced growth/planning/impact analysis of higher density housing" to goals
- Density: Design? Location? Impact?
- Monitor changes in retaining population
- No more single-family housing – will use up remaining space
- Is the desire to produce more housing or to open up available housing?
- How to develop affordable housing for a downsizing population?
- Define "appropriately scaled" in terms of "supporting additional commercial and mixed-use growth that is appropriately scaled and designed to fit within the context and character of the neighborhood"
- Location: site housing near transportation, cars, walkability, infrastructure, etc..
- Consider Accessory unit overlay
- Want homes with smaller square footage
- Want a town with generational continuity - Appeals to people of all ages and people are able to age in place

Economic Development

- General agreement with goals statements, but want more emphasis on Natick Center in goals
- The town has lost a lot of traditional businesses - Economic development concern
- There are some success stories (ex. Karate place turning to a restaurant)
- Concern over low voting turnouts
- Important that the town considers uses in the Golden Triangle being different from current uses
- Natick Center should provide more services/businesses than just restaurants
- Interest in community policing
- Need a parking garage downtown

TRANSPORTATION BREAK-OUT GROUP

- Bridge over Route 9
 - Add more ped/bike bridges over Rte. 9 between #27 & Oak St
 - Separate bike/bed and automobile traffic
- 27/Speen/Oak traffic may not be Natick traffic
- Need more bike parking downtown
- Need to be pragmatic about funding projects
- Improve public transit options for getting to train stations
- Dynamically routed MetroWest transit to shuttles (currently a 2 hour loop)
- What can we do to create an ecosystem that is ripe for disruption by alternative transportation technologies?
- How can Chochituate Rail Trail help?
- "I have three kids and drive all the time. I don't feel safe on a bike."
- Sidewalks need to accommodate wheelchairs - Eliminate barriers and poles
- Rt. 27 feels very unsafe
- Would like to see crosswalk across Rte. 9
- Train station is not handicap accessible (is going to be rebuilt)
- Potential for ride-sharing services to get to train station
- "If you build a big enough garage, you may be encouraging people to drive"
- Communities like Cambridge & Somerville have been aggressive about improving bike infrastructure – what can Natick do?
- Is there a vote for improved bike access along Washington St?
- Need policies to encourage gas lines in neighborhoods without them
- Many roads are in poor condition
- "We are going to see more autonomous vehicles; how can we apply those principles in thinking ahead?"
- Problem of utility poles: hard to move them to facilitate better sidewalks
- #9 & #27 intersection is highly problematic
- Speen & Central intersection is also problematic

OPEN SPACE & ARTS/CULTURE/HISTORY BREAK-OUT GROUP

Open Space

Comments on Goal Statements

- Clarify balance & wording
- Improve quality of all
- Conflict between preserving natural resources and increasing access (trash, etc : Preservation must be a priority
- Address invasive species
- Emphasize restoration/replanting/habitat restoration

Issues for Discussion

- Funding land acquisition?
 - Encourage non-profit engagement in land purchases, volunteer participants in clean-ups
- There is little open space near Natick Center
 - Would like to see pocket parks, small gathering spaces
 - More use of library front lawn as outdoor community space

Goal Statements

- There is much value in small open spaces (vegetated but not “purposed”) as natural resource preservation
 - On-site stormwater management
 - Aesthetics
- What do “open space” and “natural resources” mean in a broader context?
 - When is grass the wrong answer?
 - Role of sustainability & providing a climate benefit
 - Solar farms vs. open field ; which is a priority?
- Public vs. Private open space ; How to influence and maintain?
- We like the idea of connecting open spaces & understanding continuity as a strategy

Issues for Discussion

- The town should buy more open space (ex. Magnolia Rd)
- How to prioritize acquisition?
 - May be opportunistic: town can’t move quickly enough to buy when property comes available
- Maintenance as neighborhoods “adopt-a-park”?
- Focus on wetlands & areas near water
- Opportunities for conservation restrictions? Other incentives?
- Need more boat access beyond DCR park

Arts/Culture/History

Comments on Goal Statements

- Promote awareness with publicizing town concerts/events & open studios through a listserv and other channels
- Make Adams St a pedestrian precinct
 - Improve through public art, outdoor dining, seating, pop-up parks (ex. Hudson)
- Promote value of local history by teaching it
 - Partner with non-profit groups (Historical Society)
- In years past, very few knew Natick's history. This is important to us as a community.

Issues for Discussion

- Implement a passive education on Natick's history
- What cultural resources and activities exist or could exist for teenagers?
- Community Preservation Act for Historic Preservation
- Incentives for adaptive reuse development
- Natick needs a plan to protect historic buildings in case of emergency
- Given other priorities in town, some of these projects can't be funded by the town. Downtown parking is more important to town than a simple subsidy.

PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICE AND SCHOOLS BREAK-OUT GROUP

First Group

Comments on Goal Statements

Goal one: As Natick's population changes, invest in facilities and staff that will provide services to meet residents' needs.

- Goal one: As Natick's population changes, invest in facilities and staff that will provide services to meet residents' needs.
 - People are aging in the town which is resulting in individuals wanting to downsize. Housing is turning over and more families are moving in taking the seniors place
 - Have services and facilities for potential new residents, and especially the youth
- Goal two: Provide adequate and consistent investment to address the on-going maintenance of Natick's public facilities.
 - Investment in Natick in a targeted manner for multi-use facilities. Don't let private entities redevelop assets that could have public value
 - There is a limited intersection between school and town planning.
 - The town should invest in good facilities
- Goal four: Establish a practice of long-term facilities planning that includes identifying future resources needed to address maintenance or construction needs.
 - Do life cycle planning for buildings
 - The word "maintenance" could be changed to "operations and maintenance"
- Goal five: Continue to lead by example by investing in sustainable, environmentally-focused programs that limit energy consumption, reduce emissions, and increase the percentage of total waste that goes into the recycling stream.
 - Add "lead on infrastructure"

Issues for Discussion

- There is a lack of community education facilities.
- Possible expansion of existing facilities to attract non-residents to Natick for events
- Many of the traffic problems are thru-traffic related
- Capitalize on the traffic to draw people to invest in amenities
- Not many public services for working families
 - Possible service delivery center
 - Before and after school childcare
- Town is not escalating its expenditures that much
- There is budget fatigue
- Town meeting doesn't necessarily represent population, e.g. young people
- Some residents may not be long-term especially young people.

Second Group

Comments on Goals

- School projections are significant, growth may outpace new facilities
- Do the goals address all categories of people /ages
- Rising school population and elderly
- Need more resources or facilities for individuals/families at lower economic levels
- Having more housing for lower-income or resource constrained people
- The economic diversity has changed and need to address services accordingly as supportive services are essential.
- Are the police and fire departments staffed at adequate levels
- Match services with demographic changes
- Balanced growth
- Youth population services are important
- People want more recreation facilities

Appetite for new facilities?

- Currently they are building a middle school and fire station
- Categorization of things the town needs to have, wants to have, likes to have
- There needs to be leadership to advocate for affordable housing
- Need for more personnel