

**To:** Select Board  
**From:** Angela Snell, Director of Community Services  
**Date:** February 4, 2026  
**Re:** Human Service Needs Appropriate for the Johnson Future Use Project

---

## **Overview of the Human Services Study**

The *Human Services Study in Natick* (Final Report, August 14, 2025) was commissioned by the Town to assess current and future human service needs across the community. Conducted by the UMass Boston research team, the study draws on demographic analysis, community surveys, focus groups, and interviews with service providers and town staff. The report identifies service gaps, emerging needs, and opportunities to better coordinate and expand human services for residents of all ages. Its findings are intended to guide strategic decision-making and investments that strengthen Natick's capacity to support residents' health, stability, and overall well-being.

---

## **Key Human Service Needs Identified**

### **1. Child, Youth, and Family Support**

The study highlights significant demand for expanded after-school programming, vacation week care, and summer enrichment opportunities. Families report limited availability and long waitlists for existing programs. In addition, residents expressed strong interest in enhanced youth and teen engagement opportunities, including structured activities, social spaces, and enrichment programs.

### **2. Mental Health and Wellness Services**

Across age groups, access to mental health supports emerged as a critical concern. Residents cited challenges finding counseling services, long wait times, and a need for more community-based and preventive mental health resources. The report also emphasizes the importance of wellness programming that supports social connection and emotional health.

### **3. Centralized Information and Referral**

Many residents reported difficulty navigating available services and identifying where to turn for help. The study recommends a more centralized, visible approach to information-sharing and referrals to town departments, nonprofit providers, and regional resources.

### **4. Supports for Older Adults and Vulnerable Populations**

The study identifies ongoing needs related to social isolation among older adults, caregiver support, transportation access, and assistance for residents experiencing financial instability. Strengthening partnerships with nonprofit providers and creating accessible service locations are identified as key strategies.

### **5. Inclusive Community and Gathering Spaces**

Residents expressed a desire for more inclusive, flexible community spaces that support recreation, cultural programming, support groups, and intergenerational activities. Emphasis was placed on ensuring programs and spaces are welcoming to diverse populations.

---

## **Relevance to the Johnson Future Use Project**

Based on the study's findings, the Johnson site presents an opportunity to serve as a centralized community hub. Potential uses aligned with identified needs include:

- Youth and family programming, including after-school and vacation care
- Community-based mental health and wellness services
- A one-stop community resource and referral center
- Intergenerational programming and social supports
- Flexible space for nonprofit partners, support groups, and inclusive community activities
- Teen activity space

---

### **More information:**

[Natick Human Service Study Project and Report.](#)

###