



LAND USE, ZONING & COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This Master Plan (The Plan) is the result of a collaborative process that included the community at large, as well as the Planning Board, representatives of Town Departments and Administration, a Master Plan Advisory Committee and a team of consultants. Various combinations of this group are referred to throughout the report as The Natick 2030+ Team.

Under each goal, recommendations and action items are listed in the order of the time frame in which they might be implemented, based on complexity of implementation and requirements for coordination with other recommendations and actions. The order does not imply priority.

While it is the intent of the Master Plan that all of the recommendations be considered, some of the recommendations represent relatively minor changes to existing procedures and bylaws while others are more ambitious. Recommendations highlighted in green are generally considered to be particularly ambitious because they require actions or cooperation by public entities outside the jurisdiction of Natick (e.g., state agencies or adjacent municipalities) or by private businesses and/or property owners; they require the Town to take on new roles (e.g., establishing and managing a loan program); or they require extensive further analysis.

Recommendations that support sustainability and resiliency are indicated with this leaf icon.



As described in Existing Conditions, much of Natick is well-established and well-maintained residential neighborhoods, with several large commercial clusters. While goals specifically related to neighborhood character were developed, the recommendations for achieving those goals are closely tied to those for Historic and Cultural Resources and for Economic Development, and are covered in detail in those chapters. Recommendations related to housing are discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

Drawing from an understanding of the existing conditions of Natick's land use patterns and zoning, and keeping in mind the identified issues and opportunities, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for the future of land use and zoning in Natick. Through survey responses, public meetings, and topic-based focus groups, community members helped identify areas of improvement and identify and modify specific recommendations. Those ideas and recommendations are organized by the following agreed upon goals:

- 1. Maintain the character of Natick's unique neighborhoods and limit the aesthetic impacts of tear downs.**
- 2. Maintain the traditional Main Street Character of Natick Center, while promoting a place where businesses thrive, people live and work, and activities and entertainment are available for everyone.**
- 3. Support and maintain the South Natick historic village character, and encourage an active commercial center.**
- 4. Support a safe and active street life in Natick Center by investing in sidewalks, crosswalks, bike facilities, signage improvements and promoting sidewalk cafes and outdoor spaces.**
- 5. Enhance the gateways into Natick Center and the Town through programs to improve or redevelop properties around Natick Center, and at key gateways into the Town (e.g., Route 135 near both the east and west Town boundaries and around Exit 13 on the MassPike).**

The recommendations for achieving these goals are listed on the following pages under each goal heading. Listed next to each recommendation are the primary and support parties responsible for carrying out the recommendations in the years to come. A suggested time frame is also included, associated with the specific actions (in blue) of each recommendation. In some cases, a recommendation may require coordination with recommendations from other chapters. In those cases, the icons for the related chapters will appear next to the recommendation. Metrics of progress are also included for recommendations that involve tracking progress over time.

GOAL 1

Maintain the character of Natick’s unique neighborhoods and limit the aesthetic impacts of tear downs.



INSTITUTE ZONING REGULATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS THAT SUPPORT EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER WITHOUT UNDULY RESTRICTING PROPERTY OWNERS.

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT



HISTORICAL COMMISSION

A key concern with respect to residential neighborhoods is the trend of smaller, older houses being torn down and replaced with larger homes out of character with the surrounding residential development. Survey respondents prioritized sidewalks, street trees, connectivity within the neighborhood and to destinations, and consistency of scale. Interest in protecting the existing neighborhoods throughout the Town (see Map 3.3 for the location of some of these neighborhoods) has been expressed during the Natick 2030+ process, as they represent an important record of the development history of the Town. The neighborhoods also provide a significant source of single family houses that, because of their age and relatively modest scale houses and lots, are frequently more affordable than newer homes in neighborhoods with larger lots. There is a desire to maintain the scale and character of these neighborhoods, and the existing housing stock, while allowing existing property owners some flexibility to modify their homes.



1-5 YEARS



It is recommended that protections be built into the zoning code, rather than creating a new review process. New zoning for individual neighborhoods should be developed to set requirements for massing or scale, including potential elements such as minimum and maximum setbacks, heights, lot size and coverage, and/or sky exposure planes or form-based codes. The requirements would be set based on the scale of the existing housing stock within each neighborhood. Key to the success of this recommendation is strict implementation of these requirements, and the minimization of variances. *The Planning Board is undertaking this study, through the Community and Economic Development staff.*

METRIC

NEW ZONING HAS BEEN ADOPTED



Placing utilities underground would greatly improve neighborhood aesthetics. **The Town should enforce Article 78 regarding removal of poles and overhead wires and associated overhead structures along or across any public way or ways.** In specific locations, or on specific projects, this may include allowing existing poles to remain but requiring the installation of any new poles to be mitigated by the removal of one or more poles as part of the same project or in the same vicinity (within 200 feet, for example).



UTILITIES HAVE BEEN PLACED UNDERGROUND IN ONE OR MORE NEIGHBORHOODS PER YEAR



Natick residential neighborhood.



Town Center.



Examples of mid-century Natick neighborhoods.



GOAL 2

Maintain the traditional Main Street Character of Natick Center, while promoting a place where businesses thrive, people live and work, and activities and entertainment are available for everyone.



ENSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN DISTRICT WITH A HEALTHY MIX OF USES SERVING THE NATICK COMMUNITY.

LEAD

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT

NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES

Survey Respondents identified active ground floor, mix of uses, complementary architectural style, and transparency of ground floor uses as important physical elements that create a sense of character in Natick Center and other mixed-use and commercial districts. Other elements mentioned include civic and cultural institutions (e.g., TCAN, library, Common), sidewalks and landscaping. Overall, there is a strong desire for an active, attractive, pedestrian-friendly downtown with a mix of uses.

The Downtown Mixed Use District (DM) covers much of Natick Center and allows a broad range of uses. However, some uses allowed by Special Permit are incompatible with an attractive pedestrian environment with active ground floor space. Specifically, gas or service stations; warehouses greater than 1,000 square feet; and salesrooms for motor vehicles, trailers, boats, farm implements, or machinery are uses that are more appropriate in districts that are less pedestrian-oriented.

Consideration should be given to amending the DM district to remove these uses from the list of uses allowed by right. If they continue to be allowed by Special Permit, Site Plan Review should ensure that new businesses are required to minimize curb cuts and use landscaping to provide a pedestrian-friendly frontage.



Main Street blocks on which it is recommended that housing not be allowed on upper floors.

Residential uses benefit Natick Center in many ways. The influx of residents creates more activity on the sidewalks at more hours of the day, and more patrons for stores, restaurants and entertainment venues. Residents are likely to walk to their downtown destinations, reducing the demand for public parking, and because of their proximity to the Natick Center Commuter Rail Station, are more likely to use public transit than residents who live further away. Many residents voiced support for expanded residential uses in Natick Center and multi-family residential use should continue to be allowed by Special Permit. It is important, however, to ensure that Natick Center continue to support commercial uses and commercial development. To that end, **it is recommended that both sides of Main Street, from Central Street north to South Avenue, be zoned as a special DM district (designated as DM-NR on the Proposed Zoning Changes diagram on page 3.37) that prohibits residential use to maintain the long-term opportunity for office use on upper floors.**



The beautiful historic buildings in these blocks were designed for upper floor office use and provide the strongest opportunity to keep an active office component in the downtown mixed-use district. Office uses help to create daytime activity downtown, increase the customer base for retail and restaurant uses, increase Natick's tax base, and provide the opportunity for residents to walk to work, reducing parking demand.



LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT 

NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES

ON-GOING 

ON-GOING 

ON-GOING 

ON-GOING 

ON-GOING 

 1-5 YEARS 



NATICK CENTER ZONING HAS BEEN REVISED TO REFLECT DESIRED USES

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT VENUES IN NATICK CENTER

A consistent comment throughout the Natick 2030+ public process was the desire to improve the public environment around downtown arts and entertainment venues to attract more visitors. A number of recommendations in Chapter 6 are aimed at increasing arts and entertainment venues and improving the pedestrian environment to encourage visitors to come to those venues and spend time in Natick Center both before and after events. These recommendations, outlined below and discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, would help to maintain and enhance the character of Natick Center.

- + **Developers should be encouraged to include venues that host or offer entertainment in Natick Center**, where the Town is working to create an active mixed-use environment.
- + **Property owners and developers should be encouraged to include opportunities for rotating art displays in restaurants, coffee shops and office lobbies when designing their facilities.**
- + **The Town should also work with existing property owners to create pop-up arts spaces (galleries or studio space) to fill vacant storefronts until longer-term tenants are found.**
- + **The Town should work with developers and property owners to market and promote commercial spaces that meet the needs of creative businesses and other businesses in order to facilitate co-location and collaboration.**
- + **Developers should be encouraged to include ground floor restaurant space.**
- + **The DM zone and Industrial-I zones should be revised to include art gallery/creation space and custom fabrication/artisanal industrial space as allowed uses, either As of Right or by Special Permit.** This change would encourage the development of uses such as work/sell or live/work sell artist studios as well as micro-breweries or artisanal chocolate or pasta manufacturing with a retail component.

THE NUMBER OF RESTAURANTS AND ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT SPACES IN NATICK CENTER HAS INCREASED.

GOAL 3



LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT



HISTORICAL COMMISSION
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION



1-5 YEARS



1-5 YEARS



4-7 YEARS



Support and maintain the South Natick historic village character, and encourage an active commercial center.

ENSURE THAT ZONING AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS SUPPORT THE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT IN THIS HISTORIC DISTRICT.

South Natick includes both a Local and National Historic District. The Local Historic District designation requires that any development proposal be reviewed by the Historic District Commission; this review provides protections for the village character. While there has been some adaptive review of historic structures, others have remained vacant for several years. Such vacancies can result in serious damage to the buildings, and can be a blight on the character of the district.

To encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and therefore reduce the number of demolitions, the Town should consider expanding Section III J – Historic Preservation of the Natick Zoning Bylaw to provide relief for adaptive reuse of buildings on the historic inventory, subject to review by the Special Permit Granting Authority, and should extend the delay period from six months to one year. Relief could include a reduction in parking and open space requirements and a relaxation of dimensional requirements where they provide an impediment to reuse. For example, the Town of Lexington, MA allows the SPGA to modify the dimensional standards regarding minimum lot area; lot frontage; front, side and rear setbacks; maximum percentage of site coverage; and maximum height (stories), off-street parking and loading requirements, and landscaping, and screening requirements.

The Town should prioritize investments in South Natick that keep the historic character in place, but add infrastructure to enhance walking, biking, and safe crossings (See Chapter 4) to bring nearby neighbors to the commercial center.

The Town should also consider the establishment of a fund to provide low interest loans and/or grants for ADA improvements, fit-out or façade improvements to encourage preservation of historic properties. Income from the Community Preservation Act (see Chapter 6) could provide funds for a loan or grant program.

The recommendation is ambitious because it would require the Town to set-up, fund and administer loan/grant programs and monitor funding recipients. The benefit is that would provide property owners with tangible encouragement to make improvements to historic properties that will help to enhance the viability of preserving and reusing the historic structures.

METRIC

VACANT STRUCTURES HAVE BEEN REPURPOSED AND/OR REHABILITATED.

GOAL 4



Support a safe and active street life in Natick Center by investing in sidewalks, crosswalks, bike facilities, signage improvements and promoting sidewalk cafes and outdoor spaces

LEAD

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

PLANNING BOARD

ENHANCE THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT IN NATICK CENTER TO ATTRACT VISITORS AND NEW BUSINESSES AND TO SUPPORT ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT VENUES (SEE ILLUSTRATIONS IN CHAPTER 6).

Enhancing the pedestrian environment will help to improve the experience and encourage visitors to linger in Natick Center before and after events and performances, patronizing local restaurants/bars. Street level activity creates a much more engaging and inviting pedestrian environment.

ON-GOING

Where space is available, downtown developers should be encouraged to provide outdoor dining opportunities as well as streetscape improvements such as planters and seating.

1-5 YEARS

The existing Middlesex Avenue parking lot is the closest parking lot to TCAN, but is an unpleasant walk at night. **A pedestrian gateway connecting to Summer Street should be explored if the Town moves forward with development of a parking garage to replace the existing surface lot.**

4-7 YEARS

Consideration should be given to streetscape improvements, particularly along Main Street, including planters, banners and decorative pedestrian scale lighting similar to that on Central Street, in conjunction with traffic improvement recommendations (see Chapter 4).

4-7 YEARS

Adams Street currently functions primarily as an alley, with dumpsters and a few parking spaces, despite the Studios@3 Adams that open directly onto it. **Aesthetic improvements such as the introduction of banners, murals and overhead decorative lighting could create an attractive environment that could be used as a pop-up gathering space for special events.** Existing dumpsters could be replaced with fully enclosed dumpsters that sit immediately adjacent to the buildings and are rolled out for emptying. Adams Street could be closed to vehicular traffic for special events. **A similar treatment could be applied to Clarks Court, the alley from Middlesex Avenue to Central Street, although the alley is in private ownership.**

7-10 YEARS

Pop-up arts event in an alley similar to Adams Street.





DEVELOP A CONSISTENT SYSTEM OF WAYFINDING THAT CONNECTS OPEN SPACES, TRAIL NETWORKS, TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES, AND CULTURAL AMENITIES THROUGHOUT THE TOWN.

A town-wide signage and wayfinding system is discussed in several chapters throughout this Master Plan. **Developing a wayfinding and signage system will help to define an overall character and identity for the Town, with more specific identities for specific location such as Natick Center. Natick Center Gateway signs would better welcome visitors to Natick Center.** The planned new Natick Center Associates/Natick Center Cultural District Welcome Center at 20 Main Street also will help to create a Natick Center identity and orient visitors.

The wayfinding program should include area-wide maps at key locations, such as at the MBTA stations and near the Common, that orient visitors and direct them to key destinations throughout the Town. Examples of wayfinding systems are shown in Chapters 6 and 7.

LEAD

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NATICK CENTER CULTURAL DISTRICT



A WAYFINDING SYSTEM HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.

GOAL 5

Enhance the gateways into Natick Center and the Town through programs to improve or redevelop properties around Natick Center, and at key gateways into the Town (e.g., Route 135 near both the east and west Town boundaries and around Exit 13 on the MassPike).



ENHANCE THE IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OF NATICK CENTER BY IMPROVING THE GATEWAYS INTO DOWNTOWN NATICK.

While Natick Center, and the residential neighborhoods surrounding it, are attractive and inviting, some of the gateways into Downtown, as well as into the Town itself, are less attractive.

The industrial districts just west of North Main Street, as well as along North and South Avenues east of Natick Center, and along Middlesex Avenue, serve as the gateways into Natick Center and create a somewhat jarring transition from the adjacent residential neighborhoods. These districts are within a ¼ mile radius of both the intersection of Main and Central Streets – arguably the center of Downtown Natick - and the Natick Center MBTA Station, and could easily be incorporated into an active mixed-use Natick Center. Improving the gateways into Natick Center would help to market Natick Center as an inviting and lively mixed-use district.

LEAD

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT

NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES

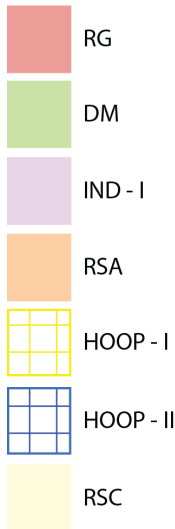


The Town should consider expanding the **Downtown Mixed-Use (DM) District** in the following locations to provide the opportunity for pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development consistent with Natick Center and within easy walking distance of the MBTA station and the rest of Natick Center.

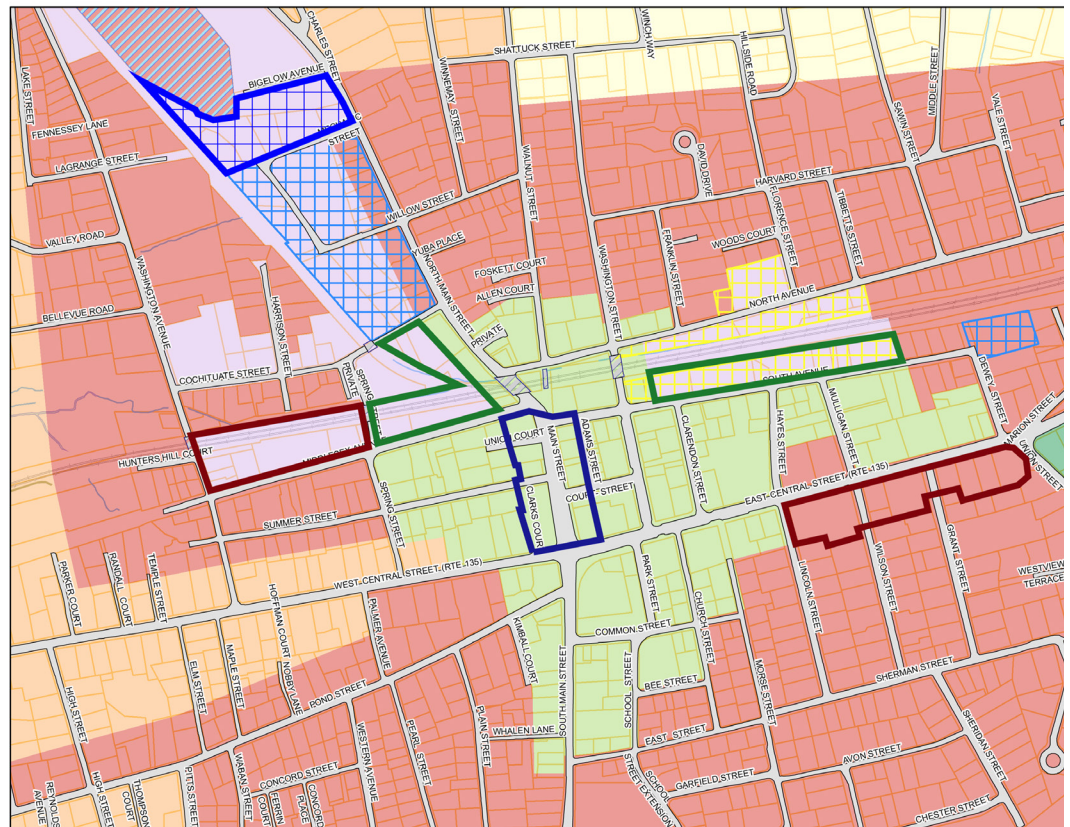
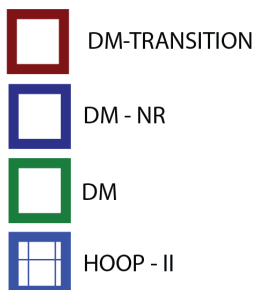
- + North of Middlesex Avenue to the railroad tracks on the north and Spring Street on the west (currently IND-1).
- + West of North Main Street to the railroad tracks on the west and Cochituate Street on the north (currently In-1). The frontage of the parcels along North Main Street is already in the DM District (*approved at the 2018 Spring Annual Town Meeting*).
- + The north side of South Avenue from Washington Street on the west to the RG district on the east (approximately Tibbetts Street) (currently In-1 with a HOOP I overlay - HOOP I overlay should continue).

Rezoning the Industrial I zones would result in a 4.4 percent reduction in the amount of land in IND-1 districts town-wide (a 3.8 acre reduction). Although existing businesses would be allowed to remain as non-conforming uses, there is concern that this zoning change could eventually force out long-time businesses who do not own the property on which they are located.

EXISTING ZONING



NEW ZONING



Proposed zoning changes.

 **ON-GOING** 

If not rezoned, these districts provide good locations for the art gallery/creation space and custom fabrication/artisanal industrial space described above in Recommendation 3.3. **Where possible, fenestration on building fronts should allow views into the space to create a more interesting pedestrian environment. Site Plan Review should ensure that new businesses are required to minimize curb cuts and use landscaping to provide a pedestrian-friendly frontage.**

 **I-5 YEARS** 

On the west side of North Main Street from Cochituate Street to just north of Mechanic Street, much of the land is in residential use. **Consideration should be given to expanding the HOOP II District north to Bigelow Avenue to allow for continued multi-family residential development consistent with the existing development (approved at the 2018 Spring Annual Town Meeting).** The North Main Street frontage of the parcels includes the Natick Mills and Dean Apartments.

 **I-5 YEARS** 

There also are several locations where gateways into Natick Center could serve as transition zones from the adjacent RG residential neighborhoods. **It is recommended that a “Transitional Mixed Use” Zone be considered that allows uses similar to the DM zone, but with lower densities compatible with adjacent residential development. This new district should be considered for the south side of Central Street from Lincoln Street to Union Street (currently zoned RG) and the north side of Middlesex Avenue from Spring Street to Washington Avenue. The zone is designated as DM-Transition on the Proposed Zoning Changes Diagram on page 3.37.**



ZONING CHANGES HAVE BEEN ADOPTED.

  **R5.2**

ENHANCE THE WEST NATICK NEIGHBORHOOD AND THIS GATEWAY INTO NATICK BY IMPROVING THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF PARCELS ON WEST CENTRAL STREET.

LEAD 
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT 
MBTA

West Central Street (Route 135) through West Natick is an important gateway into Natick and the front door of the West Natick neighborhoods. The parcels along West Central Street, particularly along the north side, provide an excellent opportunity for transit-oriented development that takes advantage of the MBTA Commuter Rail Station. While commercial uses, including office, retail and the artisanal industrial/maker space discussed above, are all compatible with the existing development pattern, multi-family residential uses on the north side of West Central Street would provide new development opportunities and would be appropriate uses to locate near the MBTA station and the residential development north of the commuter rail tracks. Residential uses have the added advantage of generating less rush hour traffic than commercial uses and can share parking with nearby office buildings. **The Town should consider creating a new zoning district for this area that allows multi-family housing. The district could be a new mixed-use zoning district, or a modified HOOP II overlay district that allows commercial use.**

 **I- 5 YEARS** 



ON-GOING



In order to maintain the tax base created by existing commercial development, the Planning Board expressed a desire for residential uses to account for less than 50 percent of any new development; the maximum allowed residential percentage should be studied further as part of the development of the new zoning. New development should be sensitive to the neighborhoods immediately north and south. The height of new development should be in the three to five story range, with three stories being the maximum height of buildings adjacent to the tracks unless views are blocked by the existing tree buffer north of the tracks. West of the MBTA Station, parcels are smaller and will be more difficult to redevelop. **Property owners should be encouraged to consolidate parcels to create more developable sites with fewer curbcuts from West Central Street.**



1-5 YEARS



There currently is no sidewalk on the north side of West Central Street, with the exception of a short sidewalk in front of the commuter rail station connecting to crosswalks at Boden Lane and Kendall Lane. The lack of sidewalks, together with the limited number of pedestrian crossings on West Central Street, greatly impede pedestrian connections to and between existing commercial development, residential neighborhoods and the MBTA station. The existing public right-of-way has adequate room for a sidewalk and bike lane. Improvements to West Central Street should include the construction of a sidewalk and bike lane. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements will be critical to the successful introduction of transit oriented development. **The Town should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements on West Central Street (see Chapter 4) to support redevelopment.**

The West Natick Commuter Rail Station provides an excellent opportunity for redevelopment and the Town should begin discussions with the MBTA to better understand their goals for the station and find ways to create a transit oriented development on the station site. The MBTA property currently has approximately 178 parking spaces which would have to be replaced in a garage as part of the development of the site. A garage would occupy most of the parcel, greatly limiting the development opportunity. Consolidating the 1.96-acre MBTA parcel with the adjacent 3.413-acre property to the west creates a much more developable parcel comprising 5.373 acres. It also creates a parcel with dimensions and a geometric shape that allow for a more efficient site plan. The aggregated parcel would give a potential developer more flexibility in the layout and design of buildings, open space, and both pedestrian and vehicular circulation. A significant advantage of consolidation is that it provides the opportunity to shift the vehicular access to the MBTA commuter parking from the current series of unsignalized curbcuts on West Central Street to the signalized intersection at Kendall Lane.



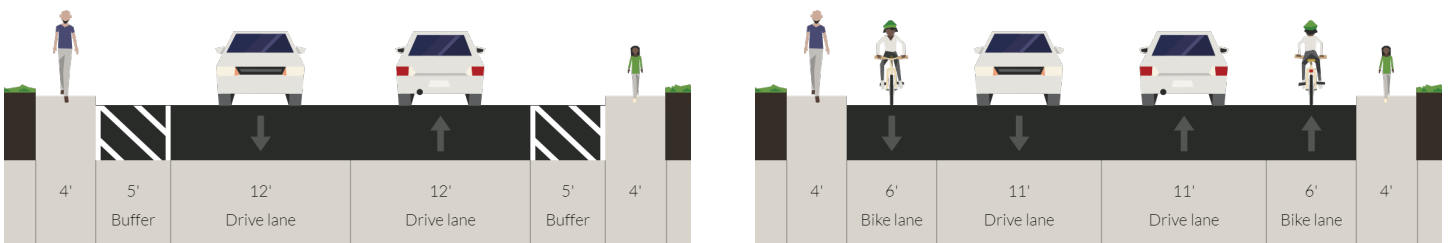
ON-GOING



The diagram on page 3.40 illustrates a very conceptual land use plan on the consolidated parcel. Two office buildings along West Central Street, and a third facing the new entry road, are lined with retail/restaurant space along West Central Street and the new entry road, and face into a landscaped plaza. Two multi-family residential buildings on the back of the parcel face into a small courtyard. There is some short-term on-street parking, but the majority of the parking for all of the uses (office, retail, residential and MBTA) is located in a parking garage and could be shared parking. **The Town should continue discussions with the MBTA to better understand their goals for the West Natick Station and find ways to expand and/or update transit oriented development around the station.**



Conceptual site plan for a mixed-use transit oriented development on the MBTA West Natick Commuter Rail Station parcel and the adjacent commercial parcel. The plan shows the main entrance road at the Kendall Lane traffic signal.



Cross section of Route 135 showing existing condition with no left turn lane (left) and option with sidewalks and two one-way in-road bike lanes. Other options are shown in Chapter 4.



R5.3

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT



MASSDOT
CITY OF FRAMINGHAM
PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS

RE-ENVISION THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE AS AN ACTIVE, VIBRANT MIXED-USE DISTRICT.

The Golden Triangle, the area adjacent to Exit 13 on the MassPike, is an important gateway into the Town of Natick and is, for many people, their first glimpse of the Town. A conceptual plan for The Golden Triangle was developed as part of the 2017 Golden Triangle Planning Study, a joint project of the municipalities of Natick and Framingham to determine the future development potential of this large and dynamic mixed-use district, and to craft a vision for the area supported by the two municipalities as well as the multitude of property owners, developers, residents and other stakeholders in the area. The goal of the plan was to examine potential creative land use and circulation improvements for the district – improvements that would serve both Natick and Framingham. Realization of the vision will require further study of the recommendations and collaboration between the two municipalities and MassDOT. The final product is a conceptual updated land use, urban design, zoning and transportation/mobility plan to support the vision and serve as a basis for guiding future development and working with MassDOT on transportation improvements. The map below shows the boundaries of The Golden Triangle and the division between Natick and Framingham.

Although the Mercer and Strathmore Roads industrial district south of Route 9 was not included in the study boundaries, existing and future development in that district impacts traffic and land use patterns in The Golden Triangle and should be considered during further study.



Map of The Golden Triangle District.

The plan is focused around a Connections and Open Space Framework Plan with a network of internal Complete Streets and open spaces that improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation and create urban scale blocks to replace the existing super-blocks. Recommendations of the Plan include:



ON-GOING

+ **Ensure that new development is consistent with and helps to implement the Framework Plan.** Development proposals should be required to clearly detail how they accommodate and/or provide new, pedestrian-friendly streets that create new connections through The Triangle with buildings sited to reinforce the street edges.



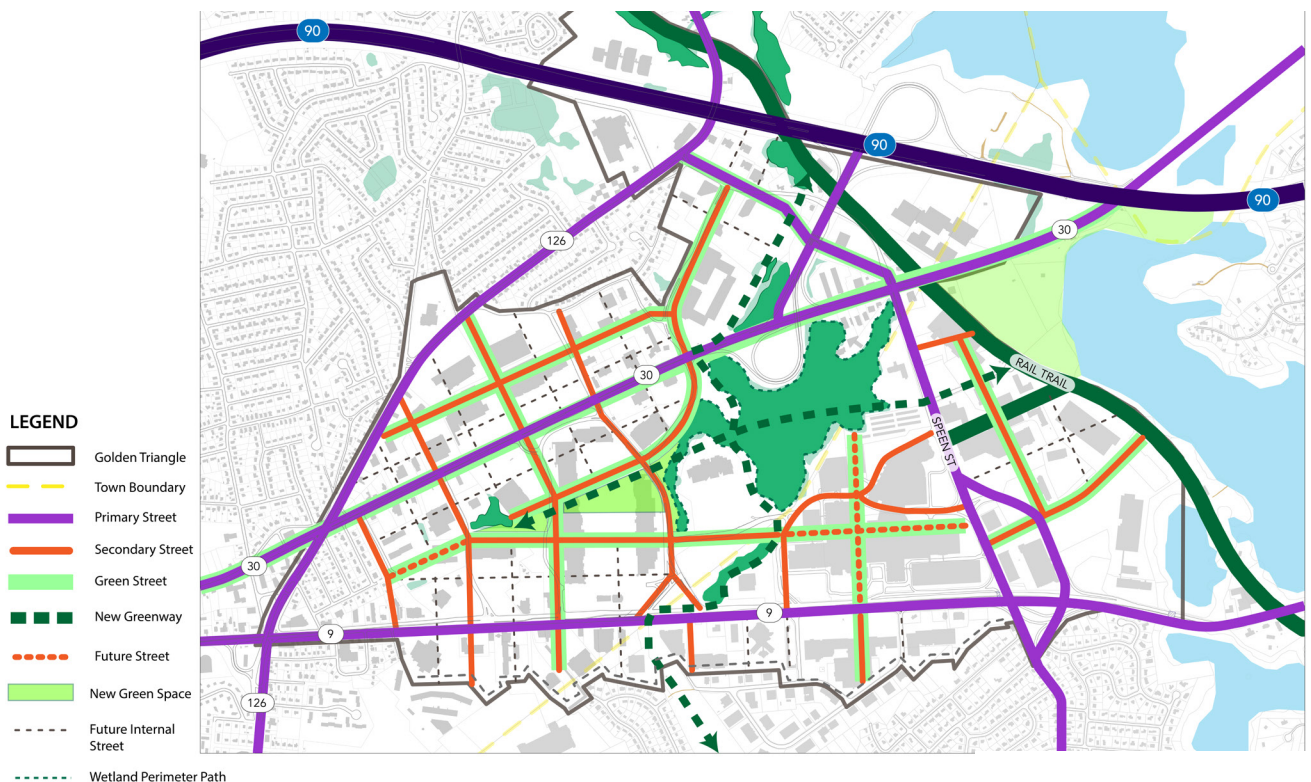
ON-GOING

+ **Encourage mixed-use development including retail, office, entertainment and residential uses.** While it is not intended that every building and/or parcel should contain a mix of these uses, individual uses should be dispersed throughout the district and not concentrated in one or two locations.



ON-GOING

+ **Encourage developers to incorporate a frontage road concept for new development on parcels facing Route 9 and/or Route 30.** This involves creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment by siting new commercial buildings further from these busy roads with a separation zone that includes a landscaped setback, a narrow frontage road with on-street parallel parking, and a wide sidewalk with a curbside tree lawn. This design has the advantage of creating a greater buffer between pedestrians and traffic on busy streets, providing additional space for plazas and pedestrian amenities, and reducing the need for drivers to exit onto Routes 9 and 30 to reach other nearby destinations (see diagram on following page).



The Golden Triangle Connections and Open Space Framework Plan



Illustration of frontage road concept.

 1-5 YEARS 

 1-5 YEARS 

 4-7 YEARS 

 4-10 YEARS 

- + Design and implement a wayfinding and signage program.
- + Explore options for defining the legal status of the pedestrian path from Essex Road to Mercer Road with the intention of creating a more definitive connection, and options for extending Mercer Road as a public road connecting to Route 9. Options for the Mercer Road connection to Route 9 include the privately-owned power line corridor, parking lots and driveways. Coordination with private property owners and further study will be required to evaluate circulation impacts of the options.
- + Work with property owners on the south side of Route 9 to study the feasibility of, and implement, segments of a connecting road at the rear of parcels, as well to consolidate driveways.
- + Develop a continuous north-south and east-west greenway system utilizing existing open space (i.e., the central wetlands – Bannister’s Meadows, the Cochituate Rail Trail and Wonderbread Spur, the pathway around the Natick Mall and other identified wetlands) in combination with the patchwork of wooded areas bordering and linking the wetlands, including a wide multi-use path and pedestrian boardwalks through Bannister’s Meadows.



Location of the path between Essex Road and Mercer Road.

ON-GOING

The Plan is based on 10 and 20 percent growth scenarios and outlines transportation improvements necessary to support those scenarios, including transit, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, as well as changes to the MassPike Exit 13 interchange and connections to Route 30 and Speen Street. **The Town should work with MassDOT and Framingham to prioritize these transportation improvements.**

Zoning recommendations are designed based on the following principles:

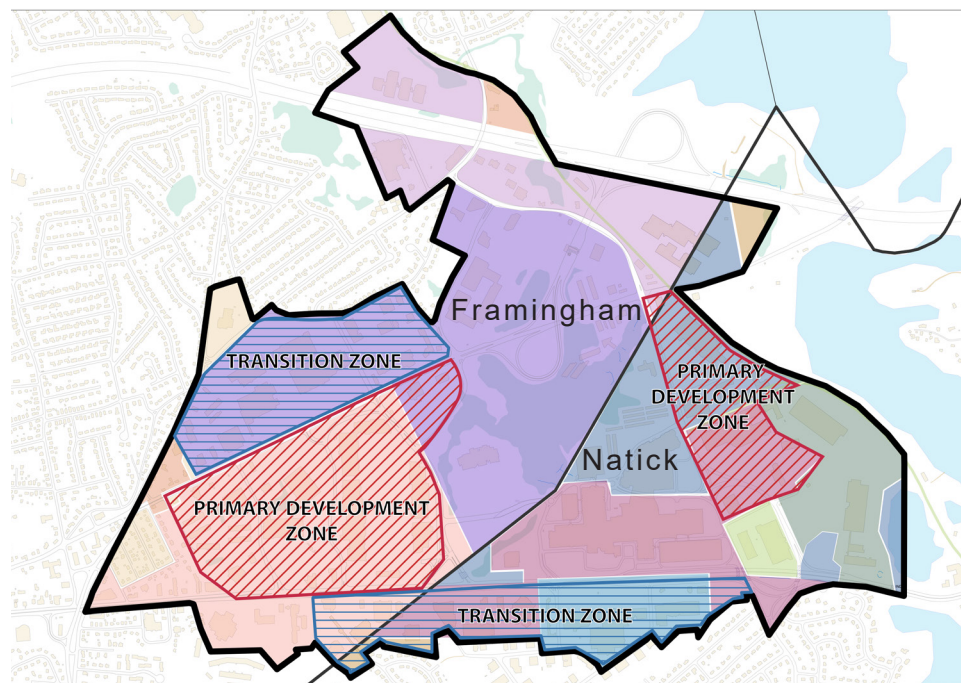
- + Ensure that new development is sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods improves the quality of life for residents.
- + Encourage and allow a more diverse mix of uses.
- + Break up large blocks or parcels into smaller walkable segments.
- + Concentrate height and density in specific locations.
- + Consider a form-based zoning approach, creating building envelopes using dimensional standards within which development can occur by-right. Such an approach may move away from dictating density through Floor Area Ratio numbers. (Natick's existing zoning relies on FAR-based regulations; the impact of eliminating FAR regulations will require further study.)
- + Establish building setbacks that relate to the type of street on which the parcel fronts.
- + Encourage parcel consolidation and larger, more coordinated development projects, by setting a higher minimum lot size (than in the existing zoning).
- + Require a high percentage of transparency in ground floor facades along streets to create a more interesting pedestrian environment.

I-5 YEARS

The recommendations include creating two new zones (see diagram on following page):

- + The Golden Triangle Study identified **the Primary Development Zone** in Natick as the area between Superior Drive and Route 30. This area encompasses two large retail establishments - Home Depot and the Cloverleaf Mall. Review of development proposals will need to consider the traffic impacts of changes in land use and whether traffic improvements have been implemented. This area holds a great deal of redevelopment potential, could support larger-scale mixed-use development, is well-connected to the transportation system and is further from nearby residential neighborhoods. Alternatively, the Primary Development Zone could be in the area around Sherwood Plaza (the area described in The Plan as a Transition Zone). Development in this location potentially could have less of an impact on Speen Street traffic, but would place development closer to a single-family residential neighborhood. The Primary Development Zones are intended to be the higher intensity redevelopment districts within The Triangle, similar to what was envisioned through the existing Regional Center Overlay District.

- + **Transition Zones** are areas of The Triangle that also have redevelopment potential, and tend to be single use structures (primarily retail), but abut nearby single-family neighborhoods and therefore are intended to accommodate smaller scale (three-four stories in height, stepping down where adjacent to single family homes), less intensive development than the Primary Development Zones. The Transition Zone in Natick encompasses the area south of Route 9 from the Framingham border east to Speen Street. Allowable uses in the transition zone are proposed to be varied to shift the focus more toward neighborhood-scale retail, office, residential, and entertainment/civic uses. These might include small restaurants, neighborhood services, professional offices, art galleries, coffee shops, fitness and wellness, and residential uses such as townhomes, duplexes, and smaller-scale multi-family dwellings.



Location of recommended new Golden Triangle zoning districts.

Both Primary Development Zones and Transition Zones are intended to be created as new base zoning districts to remove any possibility of future redevelopment utilizing the existing underlying zoning. Other zoning recommendations include:



- + **Create an incentive or density bonus provision to encourage developers to grant easements for the construction of connecting internal streets or to pay into a fund that could be used by the municipality to build connecting streets.** The existing Section 328 Bonus Density Provisions for Highway Overlay Districts could be modified for The Golden Triangle to specifically promote creating the connections and frontage roads as opposed to paying into a fund that can be used for a variety of public benefits.



I-5 YEARS



+ While the plan recommended using Natick’s existing parking requirements as a starting point, it included further parking recommendations, including:

- **Allow shared parking for mixed-use development and develop criteria for reduced parking requirements.** Consider a 10 percent reduction in overall parking for uses that do not have overlapping times of parking demand.
- **Allow for parking reductions if the applicant provides transportation demand management solutions such as car sharing, land banked spaces, joining the MetroWest TMA, subsidizing transit passes, etc.**
- **Regulate the placement of parking to limit it to the rear and sides of buildings.** Continue to encourage shared access to adjacent parking lots and the closure of curb cuts where possible, particularly along primary travel corridors.

To improve cross-municipal coordination between Framingham and Natick, the Plan recommends three implementation tools:

I-5 YEARS



+ Consideration be given to creating a district-wide entity such as a **Business Improvement District (BID)** to ensure coordination between municipal staff, governing bodies, property owners and businesses in The Triangle.



I-5 YEARS



+ The two municipalities should also consider the idea of establishing a **District Improvement Financing (DIF)** district as a way to help fund public infrastructure and improvement projects in The Triangle. The DIF district would use incremental property tax gains as a vehicle for funding future infrastructure enhancements. Further study would be needed to determine if a DIF could serve two municipalities together, where the district boundaries would be drawn, how tax revenue and cost share would be determined, and how projects would be selected for DIF funding.




ON-GOING













+ The two municipalities should continue to inform each other of development proposals, zoning changes, infrastructure improvements and similar issues.











PORTIONS OF THE CONNECTIONS AND OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED, ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED, AND NEW DEVELOPMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE PLAN.

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Maintain the character of Natick's unique neighborhoods and limit the aesthetic impacts of tear downs.</p>	<p>R1.1: Institute zoning regulations and infrastructure improvements that support existing neighborhood character without unduly restricting property owners.</p>	<p>Develop new zoning for individual neighborhoods that sets requirements for massing and scale, based on the scale of the existing housing stock within each neighborhood.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Historical Commission</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>	<p>New zoning has been adopted.</p>	<p>Historic & Cultural Resources Housing</p> 
		<p>Enforce Article 78 regarding undergrounding/removal of poles, overhead wires and associated overhead structures along public ways.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Public Works Department</p>		<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>Utilities have been placed underground in one or more neighborhoods per year.</p>	
<p>Goal 2: Maintain the traditional Main Street Character of Natick Center, while promoting a place where businesses thrive, people live and work, and activities and entertainment are available for everyone.</p>	<p>R2.1: Ensure that new development supports a vibrant downtown district with a healthy mix of uses serving the Natick community.</p>	<p>Amend the DM district to prohibit auto-related uses such as sales, service and repairs, which are inconsistent with a lively, pedestrian-friendly environment.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Natick Center Associates</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
		<p>Rezone both sides of Main Street, from Central Street north to South Avenue, as a special DM district that prohibits residential use to maintain the long-term opportunity for office use on upper floors.</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Natick Center Associates</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>	<p>Natick Center zoning has been revised to reflect desired uses.</p>	<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
							
	R2.2: Increase the number of arts and entertainment venues in Natick Center	Encourage developers to include entertainment venues and restaurants in Natick Center, where the Town is working to create an active mixed-use environment.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Natick Center Associates	ON-GOING		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources
		Encourage property owners and developers should to include opportunities for rotating art displays in restaurants, coffee shops and office lobbies and to create pop-up arts spaces (galleries or studio space) to fill vacant storefronts until longer-term tenants are found.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Natick Center Associates	ON-GOING		Economic Development Historical & Cultural Resources
		Work with developers and property owners to market and promote commercial spaces that meet the needs of creative businesses and other businesses in order to facilitate co-location and collaboration.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Natick Center Associates	ON-GOING		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources
		Encourage developers to include ground floor restaurant space.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Natick Center Associates	ON-GOING		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources
		Amend the DMU zone and In-I zones to allow art gallery/creation space and custom fabrication/artisanal industrial space as allowable uses. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Natick Center Associates	1-5 YEARS	The number of restaurants and arts/entertainment paces in natick center has increased.	





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 3: Support and maintain the South Natick historic village character and encourage an active commercial center.	R3.1: Ensure that zoning and infrastructure improvements support the appropriate development in this historic district.	Expand Section III - Historic Preservation of the Zoning Bylaw to provide relief for adaptive reuse of buildings on the historic inventory and extend the delay period for buildings from six months to one year. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Historic District Commission Historical Commission	1-5 YEARS		Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development
		Prioritize investments in South Natick that keep the historic character in place, but add infrastructure to enhance walking, biking, and safe crossings to bring nearby neighbors to the commercial center. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Historic District Commission Historical Commission Public Works Department	1-5 YEARS		Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development Transportation
		Consider the establishment of a fund to provide low interest loans and/or grants for ADA improvements, fit-out or façade improvements to encourage preservation of historic properties. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Historic District Commission Historical Commission	4-7 YEARS	Vacant historic structures have been repurposed and/or rehabilitated.	Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development
Goal 4: Support a safe and active street life in Natick Center by investing in sidewalks, crosswalks, bike facilities, signage improvements and promoting sidewalk cafes and outdoor spaces	R4.1: Enhance the pedestrian environment in Natick Center to attract visitors and new businesses and to support arts and entertainment venues.	Encourage developers to include outdoor dining opportunities as well as streetscape improvements such as planters and seating. 	Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department	Planning Board	ON-GOING		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources
		Explore the inclusion of a pedestrian gateway connecting to Summer Street if the Town moves forward with development of a parking garage on Middlesex Avenue. 	Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department	Planning Board	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Make streetscape improvements, particularly along Main Street, with planters, banners and decorative pedestrian scale lighting, in conjunction with traffic improvement recommendations. 	Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department	Planning Board	4-7 YEARS		 Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources Transportation
		Implement aesthetic streetscape improvements such as the introduction of banners, murals and overhead decorative lighting to create an attractive environment that could be used as a pop-up gathering space for special events on Adams Street. 	Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department	Planning Board	4-7 YEARS		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources
		Implement aesthetic streetscape improvements described above on Clarks Court. 	Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department	Planning Board	7-10 YEARS		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources
	R4.2: Develop a consistent system of wayfinding that connects open spaces, trail networks, transportation resources, and cultural amenities throughout the Town.	Develop a wayfinding and signage system to define an overall character and identity for the Town. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Natick Center Associates Historical Commission Historical Society Open Space Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS	Wayfinding system has been implemented.	Open Space Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 5: Enhance the gateways into Natick Center and the Town through programs to improve or redevelop properties around Natick Center, and at key gateways into Town (eg., Route 135 at east and west Town boundaries and around MassPike Exit 13.</p>	<p>R5.1: Enhance the identity and character of Natick Center by improving the gateways into Downtown Natick.</p>	<p>Expand the DM District in the following locations to provide the opportunity for pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development within easy walking distance of the MBTA station and the rest of Natick Center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North of Middlesex Avenue to the railroad tracks on the north and Spring Street on the west. - The north side of South Avenue from Washington Street on the west to the RG district on the east (approximately Tibbetts Street). 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Natick Center Associates</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Transportation</p>
		<p>Require new development to include fenestration to allow views into buildings and minimize curb cuts and use landscaping to provide a pedestrian-friendly frontage.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Natick Center Associates</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
		<p>Consider expanding the HOOP II District north to Bigelow Avenue, allowing for continued multi-family residential development.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Natick Center Associates</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Develop a “Transitional Mixed Use Zone” with uses similar to the existing DM Zone, but with lower densities compatible with adjacent residential development: - South side of Central Street from Lincoln Street to Union Street. - North side of Middlesex Avenue from Spring Street to Washington Avenue.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	Natick Center Associates	1-5 YEARS	Zoning changes have been adopted.	
R5.2: Enhance the West Natick neighborhood and this gateway into Natick by improving the pedestrian environment and development potential of parcels on West Central Street.		Create a new zoning district for this area that allows mixed-use with multi-family housing and commercial uses.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MBTA	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development Transportation
		Encourage property owners to consolidate parcels to create more developable sites with fewer curbcuts from West Central Street.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MBTA	ON-GOING		Economic Development Transportation
		Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements on West Central Street to support redevelopment.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MBTA	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development Transportation

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Continue discussions with the MBTA to find ways to create a transit oriented development around the West Natick Station.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	MBTA	ON-GOING		Economic Development Transportation
	R5.3: Re-envison The Golden Triangle as an active, vibrant mixed-use district.	Ensure that new development is consistent with and helps to implement the Golden Triangle Connections & Open Space Framework Plan, with new, pedestrian-friendly streets that create new connections through The Triangle.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	ON-GOING	Portions of the Connections and Open Space Framework Plan have been developed and new development is consistent with the Plan.	Economic Development Housing Transportation Open Space & Recreation
		Encourage mixed-use development including retail, office, entertainment and residential uses.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	ON-GOING		Economic Development Housing
		Encourage developers to incorporate a frontage road concept for new development on parcels facing Route 9 and/or Route 30.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	ON-GOING		Economic Development Transportation Transportation
		Design and implement a wayfinding and signage program.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development Transportation Open Space & Recreation

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		<p>Explore options for defining the legal status of the pedestrian path from Essex Street to Mercer Road with the intention of creating a more definitive connection to Route 9.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>MassDOT Private Property Owners</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Transportation</p>
		<p>Work with property owners on the south side of Route 9 to study the feasibility of, and implement, segments of a connecting road at the rear of parcels, as well to consolidate driveways.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board</p>	<p>MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Transportation</p>
		<p>Develop a continuous north-south and east-west greenway system utilizing existing open space and wetland areas, including a multi-use boardwalk through Bannister's Meadows.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board</p>	<p>MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners</p>	<p>4-10 YEARS</p>		<p>Open Space Economic Development</p>
		<p>Work with MassDOT and Framingham to prioritize transportation improvements, particularly along Speen Street and the MassPike Exit 13 interchange.</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board</p>	<p>MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Economic Development Transportation</p>
		<p>Creating two new Zoning Districts: - The Primary Development Zone: between Superior Drive and Route 30. - The Transition Zone: the area south of Route 9 from the Framingham border east to Speen Street.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>City of Framingham</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>	<p>Zoning recommendations have been adopted.</p>	<p>Economic Development</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Create an incentive or density bonus provision to encourage developers to grant easements for the construction of connecting internal streets or to pay into a fund that could be used by the municipalities to build connecting streets. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development 
		Parking Recommendations: - Allow shared parking for mixed-use developments. - Regulate the placement of parking to limit it to the rear and sides of buildings. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	City of Framingham Private Property Owners	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development
		Create a district-wide entity such as a Business Improvement District (BID) to ensure coordination between municipal staff, governing bodies, property owners, and businesses in The Triangle.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development
		Consider the idea of establishing a District Improvement Financing (DIF) district as a way to help fund public infrastructure and improvement projects in The Triangle. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development
		The two municipalities should continue to inform each other of development proposals, zoning changes, infrastructure improvements, and similar issues.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	City of Framingham	ON-GOING		Economic Development

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.