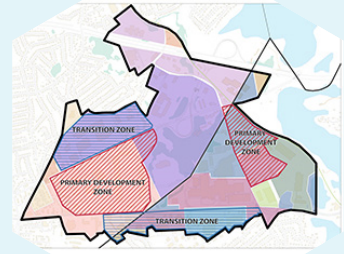




NATICK 2030+



COMPREHENSIVE
MASTER PLAN

FEBRUARY || 2019

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The Natick 2030+ Master Plan could not have been completed without the thoughtful input from Natick residents, businesses and employees who came to meetings, participated in surveys and roundtables, and provided background information, insight and comments over the course of the Natick 2030+ process.

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Executive Summary

We are planning now for what we want Natick to be in twenty years for ourselves and future generations.

Natick 2030+ is both a public process and the resulting report that define a community-wide vision for the future development of Natick and guide the daily planning and policy efforts of the town.

The Process and Plan were designed to answer three questions:

- + Where are we now?
- + Where do we want to be?
- + How do we get there?

The Plan is organized around the following eight topic areas:

- + Chapter 2: Demographics and Housing
- + Chapter 3: Land Use, Zoning and Community Character
- + Chapter 4: Transportation and Infrastructure
- + Chapter 5: Economic Development
- + Chapter 6: Historic and Cultural Resources
- + Chapter 7: Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources
- + Chapter 8: Public Facilities and Services
- + Chapter 9: Implementation

The Master Plan does not include a separate chapter on sustainability and resiliency. Rather, because they are an integral component of each of the elements, sustainability and resiliency concerns are woven through all of the chapters. Throughout The Plan, recommendations that support sustainability and resiliency are indicated with this leaf icon.



A recurring theme throughout this project was the importance of the character of the Town to everyone's satisfaction or happiness with living and working in Natick. From the outset, "The People" or "The Community" was a common response to "What do you like most about Natick?"

A community's character comes from many things – its history, in terms of the people, how it came to be, and how it developed over time; its residents and how they interact with each other and how they contribute time and energy to the Town; the built and natural environments and what is preserved and what is allowed to change; and how the Town chooses to spend its financial resources to serve residents and businesses.



Outreach and Participation Activities

Residents, business owners and other stakeholders had a key role in answering those questions. The Public Outreach process for the Natick 2030+ Master Plan was carefully designed from the inception of the project to ensure that these groups were kept apprised of project progress and that they were given multiple opportunities to participate in a variety of different ways.

The goals of the Outreach Process were:

- + Ensure broad awareness of the Master Plan process
- + Create a shared vision for the future of Natick
- + Develop a common understanding of existing conditions
- + Identify issues and opportunities
- + Educate community on planning principles and trade-offs
- + Generate widespread enthusiasm and support for the plan and implementation activities



To achieve these goals, the outreach process included the following elements:

- + Master Plan Advisory Committee
- + Project Website
- + Social Media
- + Surveys
- + Community-wide Public Meetings
- + Presence at Public Events such as Natick Days and Town Meeting
- + Stakeholder Meetings
- + Round Tables with local experts
- + Planning Board Coordination



Presentations, Survey Results and Public Comments can be found both on the Project Website and in the Public Outreach Appendix.

Vision and Goals

The Natick 2030+ process began with a review of the Natick 360 documents. The Vision Statements from that process (shown below) were the result of an extensive community conversation. Those Vision Statements (below) still very strongly represent the aspirations of the community today and formed the basis for topic-specific goals.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which:

- + Natick is a healthy community of diverse and interconnected citizens, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods, where citizens of all ages, backgrounds and income levels can live, work and thrive;
- + Natick's natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community;
- + Natick Center is the vibrant core of the community, a unique and accessible destination for commerce, community and culture, day and night;
- + Natick's public schools and programs are recognized as among the best;
- + Natick's self-government, supported by informed and engaged citizens, is fiscally sound, delivers services efficiently and communicates effectively with the public;
- + Natick's public infrastructure and buildings fulfill their function efficiently and effectively to the satisfaction of the community, and are maintained in good working order;
- + Natick is a desirable and accessible destination that marshals local and regional partners and resources to solve problems and enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

One new statement was added to address sustainability and resiliency, a topic that has grown in importance since the Natick 360 process:

- + Natick's residents, businesses, and government adhere to the highest standards for sustainable practices across all sectors and are well-equipped as a resilient community to respond, withstand and recover from adverse situations.

The goals developed for each topic area are listed below.

Demographics & Housing

- + Provide housing affordable to the full range of income levels.
- + Provide for a mix of housing options at the full spectrum of price points.
- + Support seniors who wish to remain in their homes, as well as those who are looking for other housing types at different sizes and price points.
- + Support the continued existence and increase of naturally occurring housing that is affordable (existing housing that is or becomes affordable as a result of age, location, size or other characteristics).
- + Support and create housing options for special needs populations which could include, among others, veterans, homeless, families in need, developmentally and physically disabled and elderly.



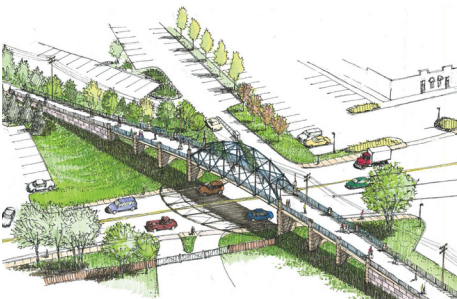
Example of a cluster housing development in Concord, MA.



Natick Center

Land Use & Zoning

- + Maintain the character of Natick’s unique neighborhoods and limit the aesthetic impacts of tear downs.
- + 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.
- + Support and maintain the South Natick historic village character, and encourage an active commercial center.
- + 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.
- + 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).



Rendering of Cochituate Rail Trail bridge over Route 30.

Transportation

- + Improve safety in all travel modes through the implementation of proven safety counter-measures, such as improved traffic control equipment, upgraded pedestrian crossings (e.g. median and crossing islands), roadway design improvements/road diets, access management measures along commercial corridors, and roundabouts.
- + Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by improving/increasing multi-modal access, including vehicular access, public transit, walking, bicycling, and ride-sharing.

Economic Development

- + Develop and market Natick as a hub in MetroWest for the incubation and cultivation of 21st century companies.
- + Identify market opportunities in West Natick and South Natick to support additional commercial and mixed-use growth that is appropriately scaled and designed to fit within the context and character of the neighborhood.
- + Support redevelopment opportunities of large-scale and underutilized sites and areas across Natick to strengthen and diversify the Town’s employment and tax base.
- + Encourage new and expanding businesses to take advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities near existing transportation infrastructure, public services, and utilities.



The new MathWorks Lakeside Campus in Natick



The Bacon Free Library



Pegan Hill Walking Trail



Natick Community-Senior Center

Historic & Cultural Resources

- + Protect and promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick's historic heritage through increased historic/cultural events and programming.
- + Support and encourage arts and culture by enhancing participants' experience with expanded opportunities for arts and entertainment venues and nightlife options.

Open Space, Recreation & Natural Resources

- + Continue to support, expand and maintain Natick's high quality active and passive open spaces.
- + Increase the number of public connections, perimeter trails and access points to Natick's lakes, rivers and wetlands.
- + Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect Natick's open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the town.
- + Preserve and protect Natick's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.
- + Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town's open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities through installation of wayfinding and trailheads, provision of updated trail maps, and community engagement efforts.

Public Facilities & Services

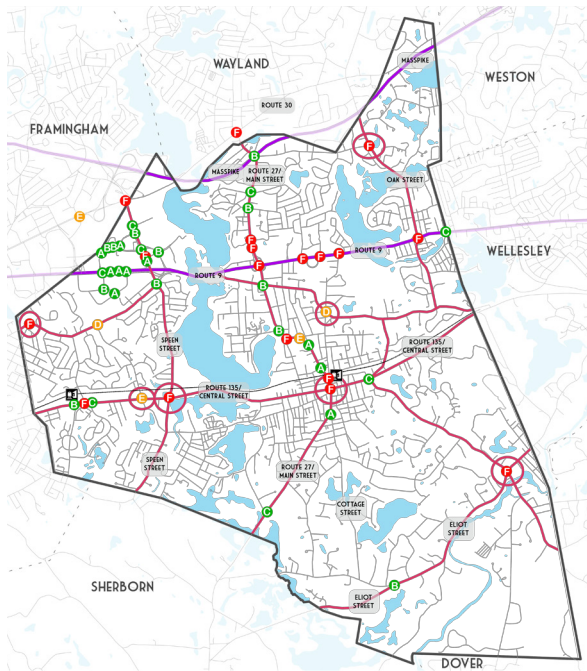
- + As Natick's population changes, invest in facilities and staff that will provide services to meet residents' needs.
- + Provide adequate and consistent investment to address the ongoing maintenance of Natick's public facilities.
- + Maintain high quality educational facilities and access to an excellent education for children in Natick.
- + Establish a practice of long-term facilities planning that includes identifying future resources needed to address maintenance or construction needs.
- + 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.

The Master Plan

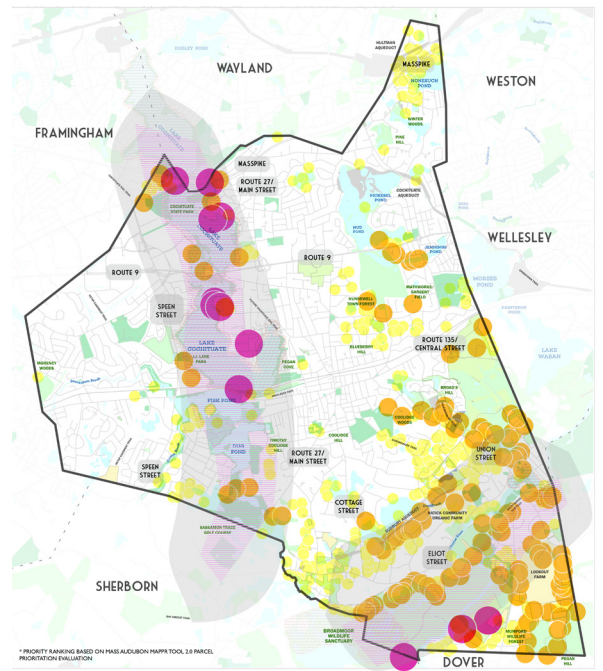
Chapters 2 through 8 begin with an inventory and analysis of existing conditions (highlighting key issues), followed by goals developed over the course of the Master Plan process, and recommendations for achieving those goals. Background information sources included the Town of Natick, previous studies and reports, and state agencies. The description of existing conditions presents a snapshot of Natick as of 2017 when the Master Plan process transitioned from the existing conditions inventory and analysis phase to the development of goals and recommendations.

The Plan is aspirational. In keeping with current master planning best practices, the description of existing conditions does not attempt to define the current capacity of specific town services and facilities. Rather than assuming a finite capacity for facilities and services, and developing a plan to work within that capacity, today's master plans focus on defining the vision of the community – what residents would like the future of the Town to be – and laying out a plan for achieving that vision.

Under each goal, recommendations and action items for achieving the goal 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. Recommendations which are considered to be particularly ambitious are highlighted in green.



Key Corridors and Opportunities for Intersection Improvements



Priority Wildlife Protection Corridors

Implementation

Implementation of a Master Plan is an on-going, long-term process requiring significant efforts and cooperation of multiple parties. The Master Plan, together with the following matrix, identifies recommendations and action steps, along with the responsible party, support parties, the timeframe for implementation, metrics for tracking progress and identification of other master plan elements with which the action should be coordinated.

Critical to achieving the goals of the Master Plan is ensuring that implementation moves forward at a reasonable pace so that momentum and determination from the Master Plan process is not lost. It will be important to institute an ongoing mechanism for tracking implementation that allows everyone involved to see what is (and isn't) being implemented. That mechanism can take several different forms, and Natick needs to ensure that it employs one that works with the Town organizational structure. It is recommended that the mechanism include two components:


- + Annual reporting by all departments on the status of implementation. The report could be included in the Town’s Annual Report or made public in some other format.
- + An annual meeting, initiated by the Planning Board, of representatives of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Planning Board and Department heads to discuss the status of implementation, required coordination and any roadblocks that have been encountered.

Master Plans are designed to be “living documents.” While there is an attempt to be forward thinking, it is not always possible to foresee future conditions – many factors related to the economy (and therefore land use, traffic, and tax revenues), technology and demographics are outside of the control of the Town. Goals may also become obsolete or slightly modified. It has been assumed from the outset that this Master Plan will need to be updated on a regular basis to account for those and other changing factors. It is recommended that the plan be updated on a five-year basis. At that time, changing conditions may result in specific recommendations being no longer necessary, becoming more critical, or needing to be updated in terms of the action steps suggested in The Plan. These five year updates will allow the Master Plan to remain relevant over a much longer period of time.







Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Provide for a mix of housing options at a variety of price points.	Increase opportunities for multi-family and mixed-use development in appropriate locations.	Critically review the zoning in the parts of town where multi-family and mixed-use development are likely to be supported politically and financially. Site higher intensity development in specific locations where impacts to existing single-family neighborhoods will be minimal.	Planning Board Community and Economic Development Department	Zoning Board of Appeals Affordable Housing Trust Board Economic Development Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use
	Support the redevelopment of properties in Natick Center by allowing and encouraging mixed-use and multi-family housing that provides housing options and brings more people to downtown to support local businesses.	Consider updating the existing base zoning district(s) covering Natick Center to allow more by-right integration of housing as a permitted use.	Planning Board Community and Economic Development Department	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use
	Increase the stock of affordable housing.	Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning bylaw with the following considerations at a minimum: A minimum set-aside for affordable units A threshold for number of units that would trigger inclusionary zoning Allow for payments in lieu of units or off-site units Area Median Income thresholds for affordable units	Planning Board Community and Economic Development Department	Affordable Housing Trust Board	1-5 YEARS	Adoption of an inclusionary zoning bylaw.	Land Use







Example of Recommendation Matrix found at the end of each chapter

2. Demographics and Housing Recommendations Matrix





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 1: Provide housing affordable to the full range of income levels.	R1.1: Increase the stock of affordable housing.	Inclusionary zoning bylaw approved at Fall 2018 Town Meeting. 	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Affordable Housing Trust Board	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Expand HOOP Districts to other key development parcels in Natick Center, to provide incentives to bring in additional housing. Ensure that a portion of the new housing is set aside as affordable. 	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department		1-5 YEARS		Land Use
	R1.2: Explore opportunities for the Housing Authority to enter into a public/private partnership with a developer to help share the costs of modernizing public housing and integrating a mix of incomes to help offset development costs.	Create a public partnership with an outside developer to help finance and construct new public housing for Natick's most vulnerable populations. 	Housing Authority	Board of Selectmen Community & Economic Development Department	7-12+ YEARS		Land Use Economic Development
	R1.3: Update the Town's Housing Production Plan.	Create and adopt an HPP to provide the Town with a tool to plan for the types of affordable housing it would like to see in the locations where the Town feels it is most appropriate and desirable. 	Affordable Housing Trust Board Community & Economic Development Department	Board of Selectmen Planning Board	1-5 YEARS	Completion and adoption an updated Housing Production Plan.	
		Conduct focus groups with Planning Board, Selectmen, and Town Meeting members to help educate them about affordable housing needs, policies, programs, and financing.	Affordable Housing Trust Board Community & Economic Development Department	Board of Selectmen Planning Board	1-5 YEARS	At least three educational focus groups have been held within the next five years.	






Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R1.4: Create a dedicated source of funding through Town Meeting for the Housing Trust.	Set up an annual dispersement of funds to the Affordable Housing Trust through Town Meeting.	Board of Selectmen	Affordable Housing Trust Board Finance Committee	1-5 YEARS	Establishment of a recurring line item in the annual budget for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.	
	R1.5: Assist low income households in financing home repairs.	Create a no- or low-interest rate loan program specifically for home repairs.	Affordable Housing Trust Board	Board of Selectmen Finance Committee	4-7 YEARS	Establishment of a loan fund and five homeowners assisted with rehabilitation projects.	
Goal 2: Provide for a mix of housing options at the full spectrum of price points.	R2.1: Support the redevelopment of properties in Natick Center by allowing and encouraging mixed-use and multi-family housing that provides housing options and brings more people to downtown to support local businesses.	Consider updating the existing base zoning district(s) covering Natick Center to allow more by-right integration of housing through a streamlined permitting process.	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		
	R2.2: Increase opportunities for multi-family and mixed-use development in appropriate locations.	Critically review the zoning in the parts of town where multi-family and mixed-use development are likely to be supported politically and financially. Site higher intensity development in specific locations where impacts to existing single-family neighborhoods will be minimal.	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Zoning Board of Appeals Affordable Housing Trust Board Economic Development Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use






Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 3: Support seniors who wish to remain in their homes, as well as those who are looking for other housing types at different sizes and price points.	R3.1: Change zoning to enable the production of a variety of housing types to help seniors to stay in Natick.	Consider how and where accessory dwelling units could serve as an effective housing option, and design zoning and performance standards to that fit with Natick's existing development pattern and neighborhoods. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Zoning Board of Appeals	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Create zoning that allows assisted living in geographically appropriate areas and minimizes impacts on surrounding properties. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Council on Aging	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Consider reworking the Cluster By-laws to better suit the development pattern and opportunity sites left in Natick. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
	R3.2: Form a partnership between the Council on Aging and local Realtors and banks to bring in housing ombudspersons who could serve Natick seniors as resources on housing options and financial inquiries.	Create an in-town resource through the Council on Aging that uses local lending and real estate experts as ombudspersons to seniors who are looking for housing options.	Council on Aging	Affordable Housing Trust Board Local Banks & Realtors	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
Goal 4: Support the existence of naturally occurring housing that is affordable.	R4.1: Implement programs and regulatory changes that will help Natick retain more of its existing stock of naturally occurring affordable housing. 	Extend the demolition delay period from six months to one year. 	Historic District Commission	Planning Board Board of Selectmen Affordable Housing Trust Board	1-5 YEARS	Demolition delay period increased from six months to one year.	Land Use Historic & Cultural Resources
		Consider instituting a demolition fee from which the proceeds could be deposited into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to be used for the creation and/or preservation of affordable housing. 	Historic District Commission	Planning Board Board of Selectmen Affordable Housing Trust Board	4-7 YEARS	Institution of demolition fee.	Land Use Historic & Cultural Resources





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility 	Support Responsibility 	Time Frame 	Metric	Coordination 
		Offer a break on property taxes in return for the preservation of the home over a certain period of time. Create a resale formula that would limit the sale price to a certain percentage of the true market value in return for a continuation of the property tax abatement.	Board of Selectmen	Finance Committee	4-7 YEARS		
Goal 5: Support and create housing for special needs populations, which could include, among others, veterans, homeless, families in need, developmentally or physically disabled and elderly.	R5.1: Assess the supportive housing and programmatic needs of Natick's residents, and take steps to address those needs through affordable housing, service-enriched housing for special needs residents, congregate housing, or other residential options.	Develop an assessment of residents' special needs and determine how best to provide them with housing options. This assessment could be a component of the next update to the Town's Housing Production Plan.	Affordable Housing Trust Board	Council on Aging Housing Authority Community & Economic Development Department	1-5 YEARS	Creation of an inventory and assessment of special housing needs.	
		Special needs housing providers should work with Town staff, non-profits, and other local action councils to develop outreach materials and methods of disseminating information to reach the widest audience possible. 	Affordable Housing Trust Board	Council on Aging Housing Authority Community & Economic Development Department	1-5 YEARS		
	R5.2: Direct local funds to support rehabilitation and preservation of public housing units.	Continue to pursue HOME funding and look for opportunities to supplement those funds with other local dollars, as well as state and other rehabilitation federal sources. 	Housing Authority	Board of Selectmen	ON-GOING		




3. Land Use, Zoning & Community Character Recommendations Matrix

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
<p>Goal 3: Support and maintain the South Natick historic village character and encourage an active commercial center.</p>	<p>R3.1: Ensure that zoning and infrastructure improvements support the appropriate development in this historic district.</p>	<p>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.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Historic District Commission Historical Commission</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development</p>
		<p>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.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Historic District Commission Historical Commission Public Works Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development Transportation</p>
		<p>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.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Historic District Commission Historical Commission</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>	<p>Vacant historic structures have been repurposed and/or rehabilitated.</p>	<p>Historic & Cultural Resources Economic Development</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>R4.1: Enhance the pedestrian environment in Natick Center to attract visitors and new businesses and to support arts and entertainment venues.</p>	<p>Encourage developers to include outdoor dining opportunities as well as streetscape improvements such as planters and seating.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department</p>	<p>Planning Board</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
		<p>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.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department</p>	<p>Planning Board</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
		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-envision 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
		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. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	MassDOT Private Property Owners	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development Transportation
		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. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	4-7 YEARS		Economic Development Transportation
		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. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	4-10 YEARS		Open Space Economic Development
		Work with MassDOT and Framingham to prioritize transportation improvements, particularly along Speen Street and the MassPike Exit 13 interchange.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	MassDOT City of Framingham Private Property Owners	ON-GOING		Economic Development Transportation
		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. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board Town Meeting	City of Framingham	1-5 YEARS	Zoning recommendations have been adopted.	Economic Development





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

4. Transportation & Infrastructure




Recommendations Matrix




Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Improve safety in all travel modes through the implementation of a Complete Streets design approach, roadway and intersection improvements, and proven safety counter-measures.</p>	<p>RI.1: Employ a Complete Street Design Approach</p>	<p>Continue to implement the Complete Streets policies into all roadway improvement projects.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Open Space & Recreation Economic Development</p>
	<p>RI.2: Implement Proven Safety Countermeasures</p>	<p>Consider these measures as potential design elements that should be evaluated for inclusion in all roadway improvement projects, as appropriate to the project context.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Open Space & Recreation Economic Development</p>
<p>Goal 2: Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by improving multi-modal access, including vehicular access, public transit, walking, bicycling and ride-sharing.</p>	<p>R2.1: Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by managing traffic bottlenecks, improving connectivity of the roadway network, and upgrading intersection design and traffic controls.</p>	<p>Look for opportunities to create connections between dead ends and cul-de-sacs and highlight dead ends that could be connected over time, either by roadway or pedestrian/bicycle connection.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
		<p>Study and/or implement improvement recommendations for the following intersections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route 135/Route 27 • Route 135/Speen Street • Route 135/Mill Street • Hartford Street/Bishop Street • Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 • Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Chestnut Street • Pine Street/Oak Street/Erie Drive 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation Historic & Cultural Resources</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R2.2: Encourage walking and bicycling as modes of travel and exercise through improved pedestrian access and environment, an expanded pedestrian and bicycle network, and improved pedestrian and bicycle safety.	Incorporate bicycle lanes and sidewalks on Route 135 and Route 27.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation
		Incorporate bicycle lanes and improve crosswalks on Speen Street north of Route 135.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation
	R2.3: Implement the transportation recommendations from The Golden Triangle Planning Study.	Further study and implement the following recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections and Open Space Framework • Commuter Shuttle • Displaced Left Turn at Speen Street/Route 30 Intersection • MassPike Exit 13 Interchange Redesign 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee City of Framingham MassDOT	7-12+ YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Housing
		Continue to work with Framingham on coordinated improvements to the Route 30/Route 9/Speen Street circulation pattern.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee City of Framingham MassDOT	7-12+ YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Housing





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
							
	R2.4: Review the pedestrian and bicycle network throughout Natick and develop comprehensive improvement plans to be implemented over time.	Implement the recommendations from the Pedestrian Accessibility Study.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
		Consider undertaking a town-wide bicycle transportation plan.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
	R2.5: Encourage increased use of public transit through improved MBTA commuter rail station infrastructure and parking opportunities and improved local MWRTA public transit service.	Implement the pedestrian improvements from Recommendation 2.1.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		Economic Development
	R2.6: Evaluate parking supply, parking demand, and options for parking management through a downtown parking management plan.	Undertake a comprehensive parking and parking management study.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS	Comprehensive Parking Study has been undertaken and is being updated every 5 years.	Land Use Economic Development
		Implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Parking Study.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development


5. Economic Development Recommendations Matrix

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Develop and market Natick as a hub in MetroWest for the incubation and cultivation of 21st century companies.</p>	<p>R1.1: Determine leadership roles on economic development issues to avoid duplication and overlap of resources.</p>	<p>Clearly define the roles of the Economic Development Committee (EDC), Natick Center Associates, and the Natick Board of Selectmen in relation to economic development initiatives, to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the Town's message is consistent.</p> <p>Extend coordination of efforts to other organizations involved with economic development, such as MetroWest Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R1.2: Improve the visibility and marketing of Natick's economic development strengths and opportunities.</p>	<p>Formalize and strengthen the role of the EDC to have a strong leadership role on economic development issues, and act on opportunities.</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Hold joint meetings of the Board of Selectmen and the EDC to ensure that a cohesive vision and goals are aligned and that there is a clear delineation of responsibilities.</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Continue to develop and refine marketing tools for economic development such as its website, brochures, and advertisements in industry sector materials. Consistent branding elements should be used in marketing materials, wayfinding signage, and other promotional communications.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Market the Town as a lower-cost hub for smaller-scale industrial spaces and as an incubator of innovative businesses. Examine opportunities on industrial parcels nearest Natick Center and in both Industrial Parks.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee Planning Board</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Consider providing funding for staff and/or EDC members to attend industry conferences or events to market Natick as a place to do business. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Economic Development Committee Planning Board	1-5 YEARS		Facilities and Services
	R1.3: Provide the resources necessary to continue to grow Natick's presence in the region.	Prioritize and implement the recommendations of the Natick Economic Development Study and Action Plan. 	Economic Development Committee	Board of Selectmen Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	ON-GOING		Land Use
		Identify and designate a business ombudsman who can help answer questions, assist with permitting, and communicate across departments and boards to coordinate efforts on behalf of new or existing businesses.	Community & Economic Development Department		1-5 YEARS		Facilities and Services
						Designation of an economic development lead within Town government.	
Goal 2: Identify market opportunities in West Natick and South Natick to support additional commercial and mixed-use growth that is appropriately scaled and designed to fit within the context and character of the neighborhood.	R2.1: Couple zoning changes with infrastructure improvements to incentivize economic development.	Hold conversations with the MBTA to better understand their goals for the West Natick station, and find ways to create a small node of transit-oriented development around the station. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board MBTA	1-5 YEARS	Continued discussions have been held with the MBTA regarding intensifying TOD around the West Natick Station.	Transportation Land Use
		Begin a process of reviewing and revising current zoning along the Route 135 corridor near West Natick to encourage more walkable and transit-oriented development patterns.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use





Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Prioritize transportation improvements in this area that will encourage walking and biking between surrounding neighborhoods, business areas, and the MBTA station.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use
		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 Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use
Goal 3: Support redevelopment opportunities of large-scale and underutilized sites and areas across Natick to strengthen and diversify the Town's employment and tax base.	R3.1: Review and revise zoning to encourage investment in Natick's Business Centers.	Review and revise the current zoning in Natick's two main industrial parks to encourage their reinvention into more modern, desirable, mixed-use spaces.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Economic Development Committee	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Review and revise the current zoning in the Golden Triangle to encourage new uses, including mixed-use, entertainment, and multi-family housing.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Economic Development Committee	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Examine opportunities on these industrial parcels in and around Natick Center, and to identify uses that are compatible with surrounding properties and consistent with the vision for Natick Center.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates	4-7 YEARS	Industrial properties in Natick Center rezoned to be more consistent with the mixed-use, walkable character of downtown.	Land Use


Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 4: Encourage new and expanding businesses to take advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities near existing transportation infrastructure, public services, and utilities.</p>	<p>R4.1: Work to retain existing businesses in Natick and allow them to grow and thrive.</p>	<p>Take a proactive role in encouraging spin-off companies from Natick Labs, MathWorks, Cognex, Abi Labs, Exponent and other Natick tech firms to occupy and incubate in Natick's industrial parks. Create pathways of communication between contractors at Natick Labs and property owners in Natick's industrial parks. </p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Identify and work with local property owners to open the lines of communication and better understand what improvements are needed to help secure a more diverse tenant mix in Natick Center. </p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use</p>
	<p>R4.2: Continue and strengthen funding opportunities to encourage a diverse tenant mix in Natick Center.</p>	<p>Consider offering tax incentives to property owners who actively market to, and secure leases from certain types of businesses that are desired, but not well-represented in Natick Center. </p>	<p>Board of Selectmen</p>	<p>Finance Committee Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use</p>
		<p>Set aside funding that would allow the Town to offer a rent buy-down program for underrepresented but desirable types of businesses in Natick Center.</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen</p>	<p>Finance Committee Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		






Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Consider setting aside funding each year to offer low interest rate loans to new businesses that would allow them to retrofit existing first floor commercial spaces in a more cost-effective manner.	Board of Selectmen	Finance Committee Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	7-12+ YEARS		
						Establishment of at least one program to encourage a diverse mix of tenants in Natick Center.	
	R4.3: Invest in infrastructure improvements to enhance Natick Center for business owners.	Develop a more robust employee parking plan for Natick Center that provides long-term daily parking in locations that do not take away from parking for business patrons.	Public Works Department	Board of Selectmen Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use
		Continue to invest in the infrastructure to support a walkable, safe, friendly downtown.	Public Works Department	Board of Selectmen Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	7-12+ YEARS		Transportation Land Use




6. Historic & Cultural Resources Recommendations Matrix

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Protect and promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick's historic heritage through increased historic/cultural events and programming.</p>	<p>RI.1: Celebrate Natick's historic heritage through identifying and protecting historic/cultural resources.</p>	<p>Implement the recommendations from the 2008 & 2012 historic surveys, including: creating a Walnut Hill National Register Historic District, nominating four individual houses and the U.S. Post Office on Common Street to the National Register, surveying additional areas, and expanding the Natick Center Historic District.</p> 	<p>Historical Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing</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</p>	<p>Historical Commission</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing</p>
	<p>RI.2: Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings</p>	<p>Provide relief for adaptive reuse of buildings on historic inventory, subject to review by the Special Permit Granting Authority and extend demolition delay from six months to one year.</p> 	<p>Planning Board Town Meeting Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Historical Commission</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing Economic Development</p>
		<p>Reconsider the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA).</p> 	<p>Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Historical Commission Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing Economic Development</p>
		<p>Establish a fund to provide low interest loans and/or grants for ADA improvements, fit-out or façade improvements to encourage preservation of historic properties.</p>	<p>Planning Board Town Meeting Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Historical Commission Finance Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing Economic Development</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility 	Support Responsibility 	Time Frame 	Metric	Coordination 
						Regulations are in place to protect and encourage rehabilitation of historic structures. The number of buildings saved under these protections should be evaluated every three years.	
	R1.3: Promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick’s historic heritage through increased historic/ cultural events, education and programming	Have High School art and/or history class develop brochures and walking maps of historic resources, in collaboration with the Historical Society.	Community & Economic Development Department	School Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS		
		Conduct an assessment of an ArtMobile or similar program to determine funding, staffing and other operational requirements, as well as potential sponsors and organizers.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	4-7 YEARS		
		Apply for participation in the STARS Residencies Program to have an Artist in Residence in the schools.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	4-7 YEARS		
		Explore centralizing space reservation and publicity activities/ services.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS	Development and on-going operation of a centralized reservation and publicity system for arts activities.	








Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Provide assistance with outreach and publicity for arts events by allowing them to be listed on the Town website and in the Common Guide.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS		
		Providing Non-Profits with grant writing assistance.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	4-7 YEARS		
		Continue to develop partnerships with like-minded organizations in Natick as well as in neighboring towns/metro-west and the State to expand programming and publicity.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	ON-GOING		
Goal 2: Support and encourage arts and culture by enhancing participants' experience with expanded opportunities for arts and entertainment venues and nightlife options.	R2.1: Increase entertainment & arts venues	Consider including space for art installations/performances in planning for public facilities and infrastructure improvements,	Community & Economic Development Department Facilities Management Department	Economic Development Committee Planning Board	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development
		Encourage developers to include entertainment venues, including eating and drinking establishments in Natick Center and The Golden Triangle.	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development








Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		<p>Encourage property owners and developers to include opportunities for art displays in restaurants and lobby spaces, and create pop-up arts spaces to fill vacant storefronts until longer-term tenants are found. </p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Land Use Economic Development</p>
		<p>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. </p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>Planning Board</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Land Use Economic Development</p>
						<p>New arts and entertainment venues have opened and two or more rotating art displays are held annually.</p>	
	<p>R2.2: Enact zoning changes to encourage flexible/mixed use in the Town Center and The Golden Triangle.</p>	<p>Add artisan/industrial space as a use category in the Zoning Code and explore districts where this use would be appropriate. </p>	<p>Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Natick Center Cultural District</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>	<p>Zoning changes to encourage flexible/mixed-use have been enacted.</p>	<p>Economic Development Land Use</p>
	<p>R2.3: Improve the environment around entertainment/arts venues</p>	<p>Encourage downtown developers to create indoor and outdoor dining opportunities as well as streetscape improvements such as planters and seating. </p>	<p>Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department</p>		<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>One new restaurant has provided an outdoor seating area and streetscape improvements.</p>	<p>Economic Development Land Use Transportation</p>
		<p>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. </p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department</p>	<p>Adjacent Private Property Owners Natick Center Cultural District</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Land Use Transportation</p>







Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		<p>Make streetscape improvements in Natick Center, particularly along Main Street, including planters, banners and decorative pedestrian scale lighting similar to that on Central Street, in conjunction with traffic improvement recommendations.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department</p>	<p>Adjacent Private Property Owners Planning Board</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Land Use Transportation</p>
		<p>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.</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department</p>	<p>Planning Board Private Property Owners</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
		<p>Implement aesthetic streetscape improvements described above on Clarks Court.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department</p>	<p>Planning Board</p>	<p>7-10 YEARS</p>		<p>Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
						<p>One or more of the streetscape improvement projects has been implemented.</p>	
	<p>R2.4: Develop a consistent system of wayfinding that connects open spaces, trail networks, transportation resources, and cultural amenities throughout the Town.</p>	<p>Develop wayfinding and signage that is consistent and helps define an overall character and identity for the Town.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Historical Commission Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Open Space Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources</p>








7. Open Space, Recreation & Natural Resources








Recommendations Matrix







Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Continue to support, expand and maintain Natick's high quality active and passive open spaces.</p>	<p>R1.1: Pursue strategies that identify and protect multi-benefit open spaces in order to maintain both a high-quality and high-functioning open space network within the Town of Natick.</p>	<p>Make a concerted effort to prioritize protection of open space based on identified characteristics, with higher priority given to parcels that provide a variety of benefits.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
		<p>Create a weighted model in GIS that specifically emphasized parcels that meet prioritized criteria.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Continue to pursue protection of privately held open space through acquisition, conservation restrictions, and easements in order to meet the open space needs of the Town as they evolve over time.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
		<p>Require submission of a digital conservation easement boundary plan as part of the permitting process for any new development.</p> 	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R1.2: Actively explore opportunities to expand & enhance the Town's active recreation fields and facilities.</p>	<p>Prioritize the recommendations of the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields and incorporate them into future improvement budgets, with an emphasis on expanding the offerings of rectangular multi-use fields throughout town.</p> 	<p>Recreation & Parks Department</p>	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>Add two facilities per year or make improvements annually to allow for heavier use of fields until field usage is at or below industry recommended use levels.</p>	
		<p>Evaluate the contribution of fees to maintenance and consider increasing fees assessed to local sports leagues for use of the Town's playing fields.</p> 	<p>Recreation & Parks Department</p>	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Add lighting to recreational facilities in order to extend the hours of use where appropriate. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		
		Explore the pros and cons of installing artificial turf athletic fields at appropriate locations.	Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	7-12+ YEARS		
	R1.3: Explore opportunities to incorporate a greater variety of open space and recreational offerings throughout Town.	Consider pocket parks as an option in the Town Center area during review of development proposals and when tax delinquent or parcels that are unusable for other purposes are available for acquisition. 	Community & Economic Development Department Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		
		Continue to work with FIDO of Natick, Inc. to approve a dog park location within the town boundary. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Install or expand offerings of community gardens and splash pads as per the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields recommendations. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Evaluate feasibility for the Town to partner with adjacent towns to help provide a community pool amenity to Natick residents. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen	7-12+ YEARS		
	R1.4: Ensure that the maintenance budgets and revenue streams for open space and recreation are commensurate with expansion of open space area and amenity offerings. 	Revisit the Parks and Open Space budget upon acquisition of future parcels and expansion of facilities.	Board of Selectmen Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	ON-GOING	Open Space budgets demonstrate per capita spending levels commensurate with comparison communities, reviewed on a three year basis.	


Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		<p>Continue to seek other supporting revenue streams and/or maintenance options for its open space and recreational facilities, including developer payments to the FAR Stabilization Fund, maintenance agreements with private owners for POPS (privately owned and maintained public spaces) and federal, state, and private grants like the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation and the Massachusetts LAND and PARC programs.</p> 	<p>Board of Selectmen Recreation & Parks Department</p>	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
<p>Goal 2: Increase the number of public connections, perimeter trails and access points to Natick's lakes, rivers and wetlands.</p>	<p>R2.1: Work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to increase the number of access points around Lake Cochituate.</p>	<p>Continue working with DCR to incorporate a gated connection from the Cochituate Rail Trail to the Cochituate State Park main area.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation</p>	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Install areas for seating and overlooks adjacent to Lake Cochituate with direct access from J.J. Lane Park.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation</p>	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Explore opportunities to provide a second connection from the Cochituate Rail Trail directly to the lake.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation</p>	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Consider accessible kayak launches as part of the improvements for parks around Lake Cochituate to help expand boating access for residents of Natick.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation</p>	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		









Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Continue to monitor the status of the National Guard site for opportunities to expand open space access around the lake. 	Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Open Space Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		
	R2.2: Expand public access to the Charles River.	Designate the Charles River as a "Blueway." 	Open Space Advisory Committee Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	1-5 YEARS		
		Provide kayak launches along the Charles River as per the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields. 	Open Space Advisory Committee Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		
Goal 3: Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect Natick's open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the Town.	R3.1: Improve the connectivity of the Town's open and recreational spaces through both (1) better connections between trail systems and parks and (2) coordinated improvements to bike/pedestrian transportation infrastructure. 	Focus future parcel and easement acquisitions on improving connectivity of the Town's existing open space.	Recreation & Parks Department Public Works Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Trails Committee	ON-GOING		Transportation
		Work to improve and expand the open space access points shown on Figure 7.3. On-street improvements to the overall open space connectivity should be incorporated into town infrastructure improvements; bike and pedestrian improvements should be included as roadway improvement projects are completed along the routes shown. 	Recreation & Parks Department Public Works Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Trails Committee	ON-GOING	Increase trail connectivity and park entrances incrementally to achieve improved access coverage, review every two years.	Transportation
	R3.2: Re-instate the Trails Committee and combine overlapping committees.	Formally reinstate the Trails Committee with a clear chair and co-chair lead identified. Create a single Trails Oversight Committee from the existing committees that cover projects related to trails. 	Trails Committee	Open Space Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		







Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 4: Preserve and protect Natick's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.</p>	<p>R4.1: Prioritize parcels for protection that serve as wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors or water quality protection.</p>	<p>Prioritize corridors depicted on Maps 7.11 & 7.12 that would produce multiple benefits for the open space network as a whole. Rank open space importance when the Town is considering future open space parcel acquisitions or making conservation recommendations as part of the review process for development proposals.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
	<p>R4.2: Update the Aquifer Protection Overlay District Bylaw.</p>	<p>Update the Aquifer Protection Overlay District Bylaw.</p> 	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R4.3: Implement appropriate Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for Lake Cochituate.</p>	<p>A final TMDL report for the lake should be compiled and corrective action should be taken to move this water body off the list of impaired waters.</p> 	<p>Conservation Commission</p>	<p>MA Department of Conservation and Recreation MA Department of Environmental Protection</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R4.4: Implement green infrastructure improvements on town property.</p>	<p>Implement pilot projects for green infrastructure, low-impact design and increased biodiversity on Town properties within the priority natural resource protection zones.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R4.5: Actively encourage protection of the priority natural resource Protection areas through implementation of green infrastructure on private property.</p>	<p>Develop and provide informational pamphlets and lists of recommended green infrastructure strategies, native/natural landscaping strategies, and organic maintenance practices to all projects seeking a permit within the priority zones.</p> 	<p>Building Department Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Provide property owners with information regarding MA Chapter 61A&B which allow a reduced tax rate for properties for agricultural, horticultural, or recreational purposes.</p> 	<p>Building Department Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		







Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R4.6: Extend the Flood Plain Overlay District protections in order to account for future climatic changes and resulting increased impact zones.	Provide a crowd-sourced website for flood reporting in order to better document the areas of Town that will need increased flood protection in the coming decades. 	Natick GIS Dept Board of Selectmen Planning Board	Conservation Commission Sustainability Committee FEMA Regional Office	1-5 YEARS		
		Extend the review of flood plain overlay district to include review requirements for the FEMA 500-year flood plain areas. 	Board of Selectmen Planning Board	Conservation Commission Sustainability Committee FEMA Regional Office	4-7 YEARS		
	R4.7: Include all water resource jurisdictional layers on the natick GIS Map website and use layer naming consistent with the town bylaws.	Add the boundary layers for the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, Flood Plain Overlay District, and Wetlands Buffer Zone to the online Town GIS Map Website. 	Natick GIS Dept	Planning Board	1-5 YEARS		
Goal 5: Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town's open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities through installation of wayfinding and trailheads, provision of updated trail maps, and community engagement efforts.	R5.1: Utilize multiple outlets for publicizing the open space, trails, and natural resources in Town.	Continue to develop and maintain up-to-date, town-wide open space and trail maps and provide them both in digital online and print formats. 	Natick GIS Dept Open Space Advisory Committee	MAPC Natick Schools	ON-GOING		Economic Development
	R5.2: Develop a consistent system of wayfinding that connects open spaces, trail networks, transportation resources, and cultural amenities throughout the town. 	Develop wayfinding and signage that is consistent helps define an overall character and identity for the Town.	Community & Economic Development	Open Space Advisory Committee Trails Committee Historic Commission	4-7 YEARS		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources Land Use

8. Public Facilities & Services Recommendations Matrix

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 1: Maintain high quality educational facilities and access to an excellent education for children in Natick.	R1.1: Invest in facilities and staff to ensure Natick's education system continues to thrive.	Continue Town support for the Kennedy Middle School building project, which will provide added capacity for Natick student enrollment.	Natick School Department	Board of Selectmen Finance Committee	1-5 YEARS		
		Consider pursuing and supporting a future submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for an elementary school project.	Natick School Department	Board of Selectmen Finance Committee	1-5 YEARS		
		The School Department should continue its practice of evaluating school enrollment trends, school capacity, and space needs for students in Natick.	Natick School Department	Board of Selectmen	ON-GOING	Ongoing monitoring of enrollment trends and school capacity is used to predict and plan for future needs.	
		Continue to support Natick students by hiring additional teachers and administrative support staff as needed.	Natick School Department	Board of Selectmen	ON-GOING	Ongoing monitoring of enrollment trends and school capacity is used to predict and plan for future needs.	
Goal 2: As Natick's population changes, invest in facilities and staff that will provide services to meet residents' needs.	R2.1: Invest in additional digital platforms and security systems to make it easier for Natick residents and staff to do business and perform work tasks.	Determine if there are additional functions that could be offered online through the Town's website in addition to in-person and through the mail.	Finance Department	Other departments that can utilize online systems for payment or applications	ON-GOING		
		Explore the possibility of moving Natick staff to a digital time sheet system to help free up time for department heads who have to monitor and enter data manually for staff.	Finance Department	Human Resources Department IT Department	ON-GOING	Implementation of a digital time sheet system for employees.	

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R2.2: Provide additional funding and resources to expand transportation services for youth and senior residents.	Consider increasing funding for the Natick Council on Aging (COA) to provide additional transportation services to seniors and residents with disabilities. 	Council on Aging	Transportation Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	4-7 YEARS		Transportation 
		Explore a partnership with MetroWest RTA to bring additional bus service to Natick to ease transportation pressures on the COA. 	Council on Aging	Transportation Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	4-7 YEARS		Transportation
		Identify longer-term transportation solutions to help get teens from school to relevant spaces like the Teen Center for after-school activities. 	Community Services Department	Transportation Advisory Committee Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	1-5 YEARS		Transportation
	R2.3: Expand the functionality and accessibility of town-owned buildings, and provide staff increases where needed.	Complete a comprehensive accessibility audit of all town-owned buildings to determine what improvements need to be made. Subsequently, a phased approach should be taken to integrate improvements into the capital plan over time. 	Facilities Management Department		4-7 YEARS	Development of an ADA accessibility plan and integrate funding for improvements into capital plans.	
		Determine methods to fund the Teen Center as an ongoing budget item. 	Community Services Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
		Explore the feasibility of expanding the Cole Center over time to accommodate activities as well as a permanent location for a Teen Center. 	Community Services Department	Facilities Management Department Board of Selectmen	7-12+ YEARS	Creation of a sustainable, long-term funding source for the Teen Center.	Open Space & Recreation
		Increase funding for the Natick COA in order to provide additional programming for seniors. 	Council on Aging	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Work with the Fire Chief to identify staffing levels that meet the changing demands of residents and the built environment. 	Fire Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Work with the DPW Director to identify a satisfactory level of staffing to properly maintain the parks, fields, and public spaces in Natick, and hire for those positions. 	Public Works Department	Board of Selectmen Finance Committee	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
Goal 3: Provide adequate and consistent investment to address the ongoing maintenance of Natick's public facilities.	R3.1: Ensure that the Facilities Management Department has the resources to keep public facilities in a state of good repair.	Continue to plan for both short- and long-term capital needs through a transparent and inclusive capital planning process. 	Facilities Management Department	All other Town departments	ON-GOING		All Elements 
		Consider hiring an Assistant Director to spread some of the responsibilities of running the Facilities Management Department across two people.	Facilities Management Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Consider hiring additional craftspeople to help with ongoing maintenance related to water and sewer facilities/ infrastructure and parks and recreation facilities and fields.	Facilities Management Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Evaluate the effectiveness of current service contracts and determine if and when it makes financial sense to hire additional Natick facilities staff.	Facilities Management Department	Human Resources Department	7-12+ YEARS		
Goal 4: Establish a practice of long-term facilities planning that includes identifying future resources needed to address maintenance or construction needs.	R4.1: Provide the Facilities Management Department with the resources needed to engage in long-term capital planning and proactive facilities maintenance. 	Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of capital needs of each town-owned facility in Natick.	Facilities Management Department	All other applicable departments	1-5 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Develop a twenty-year facilities plan to better understand the full breadth of need, timing, and budget for maintaining Natick's public facilities. 	Facilities Management Department	All other applicable departments	1-5 YEARS	Development of a long-term capital planning tool and integration into the five-year capital plan.	
		The Facilities Management Department should work with all other applicable departments to coordinate and input a full inventory of buildings, systems, and equipment, with useful life statistics, into Natick's School Dude software program. 	Facilities Management Department	All other applicable departments	1-5 YEARS	Long-term capital planning is programmed into School Dude platform and progress is being tracked.	
Goal 5: 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.	R5.1: Evaluate the demand for and effectiveness of increasing waste disposal services.	Explore the feasibility of implementing a weekly curbside recycling program. 	Public Works Department	Sustainability Coordinator	4-7 YEARS		
		Analyze data from the current composting pilot program and determine the feasibility of implementing a town-wide compost pick-up program.	Public Works Department	Sustainability Coordinator	4-7 YEARS		
	R5.2: Identify opportunities to invest in new green technology and sources of energy to reduce the Town's carbon footprint.	Evaluate investments in electric power for smaller-engine town vehicles, with a goal of eventually shifting the town's entire fleet from fossil fuels to electric. 	Sustainability Coordinator	Public Works Department	7-12+ YEARS		
		Continue to explore the feasibility of installing solar canopies over municipal lots. 	Sustainability Coordinator	Public Works Department	7-12+ YEARS	Increase in the amount of solar energy generated for the Town.	



1. Introduction

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As citizens of Natick, we value Natick’s “small-town” sense as a safe, interconnected community fed by its heritage, pride and spirit of volunteerism, and by its diversity, derived from its tradition of affordability and welcoming nature. //

-Natick 360

Over the course of developing this Master Plan, numerous discussions took place with Town residents, local businesses and Town employees; meeting attendees responded to questions and provided comments; surveys were filled in; and comments were sent to the Natick 2030+ website and left in comment boxes. A recurring theme through all of this input was the importance of the character of the Town to everyone’s satisfaction or happiness with living and working in Natick. From the outset, “The People” or “The Community” was a common response to “What do you like most about Natick?”

A community’s character comes from many things – its history, in terms of the people, how it came to be, and how it developed over time; its residents and how they interact with each other and how they contribute time and energy to the Town; the built and natural environments and what is preserved and what is allowed to change; and how the Town chooses to spend its financial resources to serve residents and businesses.

Natick’s History¹

Natick’s history is described briefly below, and expanded upon as it relates to individual topics in the following chapters.

Natick began in 1651 as a settlement of “Praying Indians” on land granted by the General Court, led by the Puritan missionary, John Eliot. The “Praying Indians” settled on both sides of the Charles River in South Natick and built a bridge over the river, along with three streets, which today are known as Eliot, Union and Pleasant Street. The settlement lasted for over 20 years, only to be disrupted when King Philip, son of the Indian Chief Massasoit, attacked the English settlers in the area. As a result, the “Praying Indians” were first restricted to their villages and then sent to Deer Island. Some returned seven months later, but the “Praying Indians” did not flourish again. By 1725 they had sold most of their land to pay their debts, drifted away or succumbed to disease, and were soon outnumbered by English settlers. Prior to 1686, Thomas Sawin was invited by the Native Americans to live in Natick and establish a grist mill, the first European settler invited by the Native Americans. The Thomas Sawin House, built in 1696, is located on the grounds of the Audubon Society’s Broadmoor Wildlife Reservation.

Although South Natick remained the focal point during the 17th century, during the 1730s a secondary Colonial settlement developed east of Lake Cochituate. The Town transitioned from a somewhat Anglicized but native-run community to a European owned and operated Town.

¹ Massachusetts Historic Commission Reconnaissance Survey Natick Town Report, 1980.

During the Federal period (1775-1830) there were small increases in population, but no significant foreign-born population. South Natick built up more densely as a village, with limited development around Natick Center.

The Town was originally a farming community, but by the late 18th century industrialization began to take hold. Mills along the Charles River sprung up and created industrial jobs. Proximity to Boston facilitated the growth of trade and industry, and was helped along by the Worcester Turnpike and railroad. Nails and paper were two of the goods produced by the mills.

The Early Industrial Period (1830-1870) saw the introduction of the railroad through Natick Center in 1835, followed by large population increases. The largest group was Irish, followed by smaller populations of English and German. Much of the population increase in the 1840s and 1850s is believed to have come from mechanics from New Hampshire and Maine who were drawn to Natick by its industry.

Natick Center grew rapidly as the Town's main village, and the economy was dominated by the shoe industry. Villages in South Natick and Felchville (near the intersection of North Main and Bacon Streets) continued to grow but declined in importance. The building of the Boston to Worcester railroad and the beginning of the Boston & Albany line, from 1831 to 1835, brought another wave of Irish laborers to Natick.

During the Late Industrial Period (1870-1915) suburban trolley routes extended from Boston to Framingham through Natick Center (1890s) along Central and Pond Streets. The inter-urban electric railway was built along the Boston and Worcester Turnpike (Route 9) in 1903 as mainline suburban service. A branch to Natick Center was built around Pleasant Street/Walnut Hill.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Natick began to specialize in shoe making. By 1880 the town had 23 shoe manufacturers and was the third largest producer of boots and shoes in the nation.² Natick Center continued to grow, with a small amount of additional growth in South Natick and Felchville.

The population continued to grow rapidly during the Late Industrial Period, with a large foreign population. By 1895 - when 8,814 people lived in Natick - one out of five was foreign born. Of these, nearly a thousand (57 percent) were from Ireland. The 1895 population statistics also included 300 Canadians, 200 English, 100 Germans, and two Italians. By the turn of the century new immigrants included 300 Italians, 200 Turks, 76 Greeks, and an assortment of others including Russians, Austrians, Poles, Syrians, Finns, Albanians and Lithuanians. The result was that about 3,700 native-born Natick residents had foreign-born parents and 61 percent of Natick's population was first or second generation Americans. The Town also saw an influx of gypsies in the early 1900s. The Natick Bulletin on Nov. 9, 1906 reported "The Gypsies Encamped in Large Numbers near Lake Cochituate. About forty of them - men, women, and children, and about twenty horses with wagons, bags, baggage, and tents settled there for the winter."³

During the Early Modern Period (1915-1940) a number of railway routes were abandoned with the building of Route 9 as an express auto highway. There was some growth around the periphery of Natick Center but residential development began



Casey's Diner on south Avenue has been serving Natick residents and workers since 1927.

² Natick Historical Society.

³ Ibid.

to shift to the north toward Route 9 and East Natick. The shoe industry declined. There were 12 factories in 1919 and only 2 by 1928. The Northway Motor Truck Co. (1919-1923) for a brief period employed 500 mechanics.

Following World War II, Natick saw tremendous growth resulting from returning soldiers and their families. Between 1940 and 1950, the population grew from 13,851 to 19,838 (43%). From 1950 to 1970 the population grew to 31,057 (57% increase). The Town changed from a manufacturing town to a commuter suburb. Retail activity grew in the 1960s with the opening of Sherwood Plaza and the Natick Mall in 1960 and 1966, respectively.

Natick Today

While the Town today is still 87 percent white, demographic changes have resulted in an increased Latino population. Natick's Latino population has risen more than 26 percent, from just 635 people in 2000 to almost 798 in 2014. Asians are the most dominant minority across nearly all census tracts. Town-wide, Asians account for about 8 percent of the total population.⁴



This prominent plaza at Main Street and South Avenue has a number of veterans memorials, as do the Town Common and the grounds in front of the Police and Fire Departments and the Morse Institute.

Natick has a strong veteran's culture, exemplified when one out of every seven Natick residents served in World War II. Many returning veterans bought homes in Natick and started local businesses. The neighborhoods built during the post-war years are strong and cohesive neighborhoods today, and the strong influence of the veteran's culture is evident through the existing Veteran's organizations including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the MA Army National Guard Readiness Center and the AmVets, as well as through the large number of Veterans' Memorials throughout Town. The U.S. Army Natick Soldier System Center, started in 1952, employs 1600 people (both civilians and military personnel). The Town has a Veterans Affairs Office within the Community Services Department. According to the Director of Veterans Services, approximately, 3,200 veterans reside in Natick (almost 10% of the total population); and the town has approximately 160 veterans who served in the Iraq/Afghanistan war.

The Town of Natick's ongoing commitment to providing housing and services for the broad range of residents can be seen in the housing development regulations adopted over the years, including:

- + The Inclusionary Housing Option Program (IHOP), adopted in 1991, allows developers creating 10 or more new dwelling units to apply to the Planning Board for a special permit that will permit them to receive additional units and relaxation of frontage requirements in exchange for the provision of affordable housing units.
- + The Housing Overlay Option Plan (HOOP) districts, adopted in 2004, are designed "to increase production of dwelling units affordable to persons and households of low and moderate income in a manner consistent with the character of the downtown area."

Cluster zoning adopted by the Town was designed "To permit more economical and efficient use of residential land than may be accomplished through standard subdivision development by: protecting the existing character of the landscape,

⁴ American Community Survey 2010-2014 B02001 and B03002, "Race" and "Hispanic or Latino Origin."



The Next Stop Natick mural at the Natick Center Commuter Rail Station illustrates Natick's history.

introducing some variety into residential development, and preserving for the Town more open space for water supply; flood protection; woodland, field and wetland habitat; conservation; and recreation.”

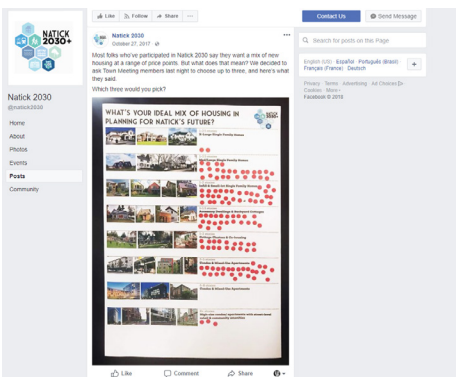
Recent development of the Community-Senior Center and construction of a new High School in 2012, the ongoing support for necessary school improvements, the hiring of an Opioid Addiction Outreach Specialist, and the 2016 purchase of the CSX right of way for the Cochituate Rail Trail, and the Pegan Hill conservation restriction for open space all exemplify the continuing commitment on the part of Town officials and residents to provide exceptional facilities and services to benefit a wide range of residents. The Town’s protection of historic, cultural and natural resources is described in detail in the chapters that follow this introduction.

Natick residents serve on over 53 volunteer and elected boards and committees, and there is a 180-member Representative Town Meeting. This extraordinary contribution of time and energy reflects the commitment that residents feel to the Town, their community and their fellow residents.

All of the values described above were highlighted during the October 27-29, 2006, “Vision for the Future” weekend, held as part of Natick 360. Natick 360 was a strategic planning process sponsored by five of the Town’s boards and committees: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Planning Board and School Committee. Authorized by the 2006 Spring Annual Town Meeting, the four phase process resulted in the Natick 360 Strategic Plan 2008-2012, finalized in Spring 2008. That Plan included a series of goals and action items for achieving each of the goals. The work done as part of Natick 360 provided valuable insight and background information for the Existing Conditions analyses in Chapters 3 through 8.

Other more recent studies were reviewed as background reference material. These included:

- + [Natick Center Plan, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2016](#)
- + [Master Plan for Parks and Fields, Weston & Sampson, 2016](#)
- + [Town of Natick Economic Development Study & Action Plan, Investment Consulting Associates NA, LLC, 2016](#)



Two screenshots from the Natick2030+ Facebook page.

Master Plan Advisory Committee

The Master Advisory Committee (MPAC) was established in 2016 with the following charge:

- + Advise the Planning Board on the scope, development, and implementation strategy of an updated comprehensive Master Plan in accordance with the Town Charter and MGL Ch 41 S81D.
- + Support the Planning Board's effort to ensure broad public and Town participation in the master planning process.
- + Provide the Planning Board and staff with any materials and lessons from the Strategic Plan Review Committee (SPRC) and Master Planning Steering Committee (MPSC) that may inform the master planning process.
- + Undertake other work related to the Master Plan as requested by the Planning Board.

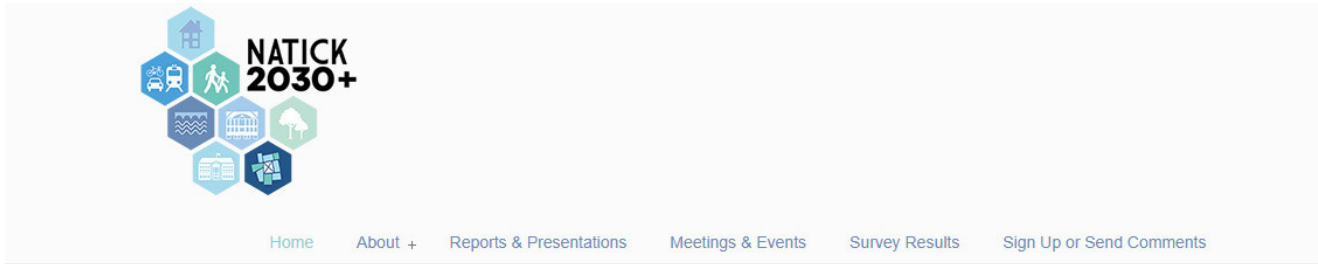
Members of the Advisory Committee serve at large and include a mix of representatives of Town government bodies and non-affiliated members of the wider Natick community. The composition and charge of the MPAC may change over time to best serve the different stages of the master planning process over its duration. Members will be appointed by a majority vote of the Planning Board. Also to establish the MPAC, the Planning Board intends to appoint all current members and officers of the MPSC (Master Plan Steering Committee) to the MPAC upon dissolution of the MPSC by the Board of Selectmen and affirmation of each member's interest in serving. (The MPAC Charter)

Regular meetings were held with this Committee of citizens who acted as a sounding board for ideas and concerns throughout the project, and assisted with outreach activities. The MPAC met approximately monthly over the course of the project to review project progress and to provide guidance on public outreach. Members of the MPAC helped to organize and staff tables at public events, publicize and facilitate discussion at the Community Meetings, and maintain the Natick 2030+ Facebook Page.

Project Website

A Project Website (www.natick2030.com) was developed to create a location on which the project could be explained and reported on to a large audience. All meeting announcements, presentations, meeting summaries, surveys and survey results, and work products (for example, draft Master Plan report sections) were posted on the website. The website also allowed people to sign up for the project mailing list and to send in comments.

An email mailing list was developed, beginning with anyone who had signed in at events or via the website. This list was used to email meeting and survey announcements, as well as other project news.



The Existing Conditions Report is now available [HERE](#) and on the Reports & Presentations Page

Submit comments for the Existing Conditions Report [HERE](#)

What's New

- [Natick 2030+ at Spring 2018 Town Meeting](#)
- [Survey Results](#)
- [Natick 2030+ at Natick Days: September 9th, 2017](#)
- [Spring 2017 Town Meeting](#)
- [Community Senior Center Outreach Meeting: May 2, 2017](#)
- [Natick Center Outreach Meeting: March 2, 2017](#)

About the Project

What is our shared vision for Natick's future development and how do we get there? Natick **2030+** is an approximately 18 month public process and the resulting Town-wide Master Plan that will answer:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

We're planning now for what we want Natick to be for our own future and for generations to come.



About the Project



Reports and Presentations



Meetings and Events



Sign Up / Comments

Natick 2030+ Progress



Screen shot of the Natick 2030+ website homepage.

What do you think are the important physical elements that help create a sense of character in Natick Center and other mixed-use and commercial districts?



Comment Summary

- Note that Natick Center needs a much more vibrant night-life - bars, restaurants, and coffee joints.
- Adopt traditional wooden/gold or other historical signage rules within Natick Center.
- Signs and cultural institutions e.g. TCAN, library, Town Common.
- Sometimes a very different architectural style is still complementary, too alike looks like.
- South Natick has de facto mixed use, make it official and encourage it.
- Sidewalks, accessibility, landscaping, free parking.

Example of survey results from the Summer Survey.



Example of emails and flyers distributed prior to public meetings.

Social Media

The Master Plan Advisory Committee sponsored a Natick 2030+ Facebook page that provided an additional opportunity to keep residents and stakeholders informed about the project.

On-Line Surveys

In addition to the surveys that enabled residents to respond to questions asked at the public meetings (described later), a series of surveys was conducted over the spring and summer of 2017.

MetroQuest Community Survey – April 23 to May 22, 2017 (1452 responses):

The MetroQuest survey provided a highly interactive platform that allowed participants to prioritize topic areas; respond to more specific questions and provide comments on those topics; and map suggestions and comments. Responses provided the basis for developing goal statements and recommendations.

Goals Statement Survey – July 4 to August 2, 2017 (279 Responses):

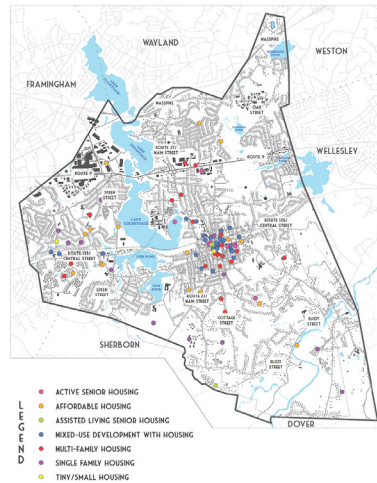
As a follow-up to the MetroQuest Survey, this survey included potential goal statements for Community Character; Housing; Economic Development; Arts, Culture & History; Recreation and Natural Resources; and Public Facilities, Services and Education. Participants had the opportunity to agree or disagree with 27 potential goal statements, as well as to suggest additional goal statements. Responses provided the basis for refining goal statements and recommendations.

Summer Survey – September 7 to October 1, 2017 (925 Responses):

This three-part survey asked more detailed questions about specific topics. Responses provided the basis for further refining recommendations:

- + Survey I: Arts, Culture & History; Community Character; Housing
- + Survey II: Economic Development; Open Space & Recreation
- + Survey III: Transportation; Public Facilities, Services & Education

SUGGESTED NEW HOUSING



HOUSING GOALS

Provide a mix of housing at a variety of price points.



Support seniors who wish to remain in their homes, as well as those who are looking for other housing types at different sizes and price points.



Encourage higher density housing to locate in appropriate locations throughout Natick.



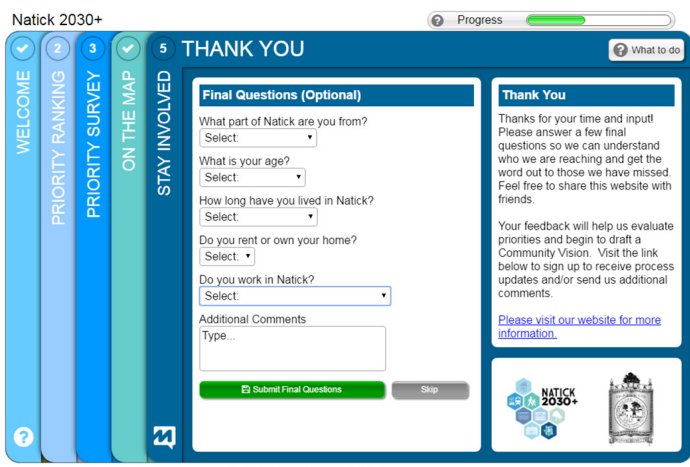
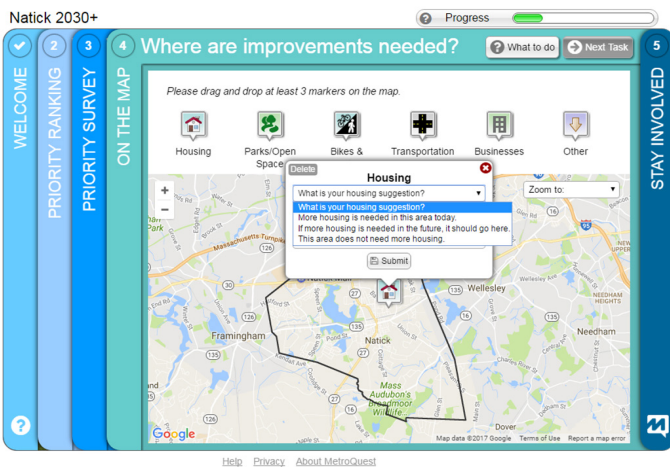
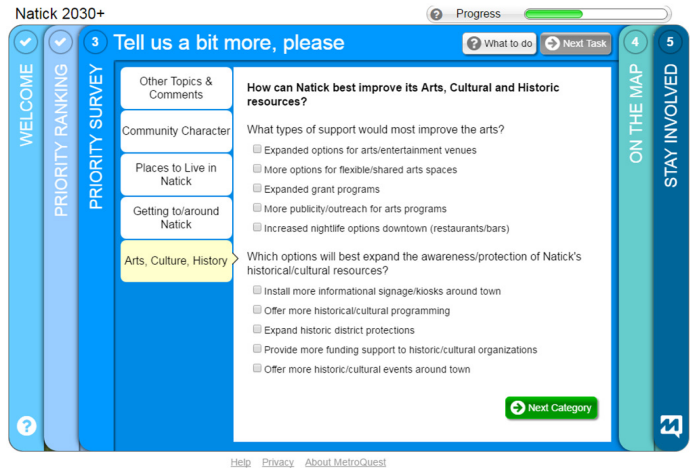
ARE THERE ANY OTHER GOALS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

"There should be some kind of goal to link housing to classroom size and take into account the need for school expansion as population changes.

"Allow the creation of accessory dwelling units by right."

"Encourage low-impact development and sustainable design."

Example of survey results from the Goals Statement Survey.



Screenshots showing the progression of questions on the MetroQuest survey.



Above: Photos from Meeting 1.



Community-Wide Public Meetings

Four community-wide meetings were held to encourage broad participation. Meetings were widely advertised in local newspapers, on the Town and Project Websites, via the Natick 2030+ Facebook page, and email announcements to the project mailing list and to contact people at local organizations encouraging them to forward the announcements to their organizational mailing lists. For the November 29, 2016 meeting, a postcard was mailed to every household and business in Natick. Following each of the public meetings, on-line surveys allowed people unable to attend in person to answer the same questions discussed in the breakout sessions.

Meeting 1 – June 16, 2016: This meeting was held in a tent on the Common, at the same time as a regular Thursday evening Natick Night, to increase visibility and attract participants who might not otherwise have come to a public meeting. A brief presentation introducing the Master Plan project and the history of Natick’s development was given twice during the evening, and tables set up around the tent enabled participants to review existing conditions information, respond to a few questions about recent planning efforts, neighborhood issues and town-wide issues; and ask questions about the project.

Meeting 2 – November 29, 2016: At this meeting held at the Wilson Middle School, participants were asked to indicate on a map where they lived, and to fill in a brief demographic survey that was used to help determine that the project was reaching residents from all over Town and from a wide range of age groups. Displays around the room allowed participants to learn about the Existing Conditions data being collected. Following a summary presentation on Existing Conditions, participants broke into smaller groups where they were led in a discussion of the following topics:

- + Community Character
- + Housing
- + Economic Development
- + Arts, Cultural & Historic Resources
- + Open Space Resources
- + Transportation
- + Public Facilities, Services & Education

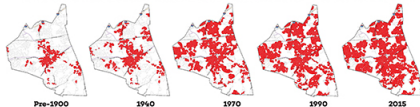
For each topic, the discussion focused on answering the questions:

- + What is your vision for the best outcome in the next five years and in 10+ years?
- + What are the town’s barriers and the strengths for reaching that vision?

Information gathered at this meeting was used to develop the Vision and Goals for the Master Plan.

Housing and Demographics

Residential Growth Pattern in Natick: Pre-1900 to 2015



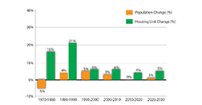
Housing

- 61% of homes in Natick are detached single-family structures.
- 26% of all housing in Natick is renter-occupied.
- The median sale price of a single-family home in 2015 was \$521,000.
- Between 2011 and 2015, average rent for multi-family units increased 23%.

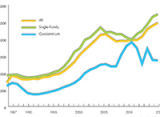
Demographics

- Natick’s population is projected to increase by 7% between 2010 and 2030.
- Natick residents over the age of 65 currently comprise 15% of the total population.
- 14% of Natick’s current population is foreign-born.
- Natick’s median household income is \$95,465.

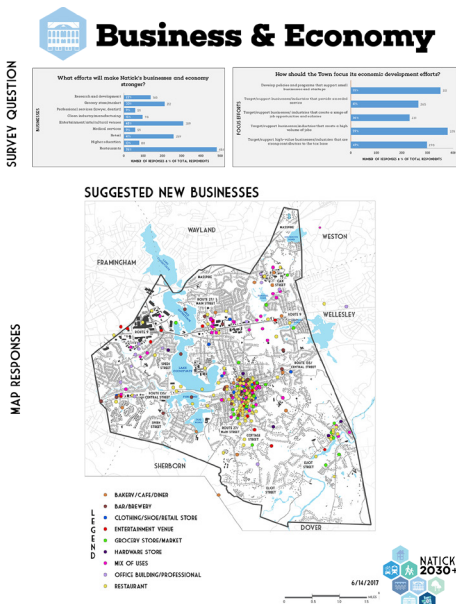
Population and Housing Unit Change 1970-2030



Median Sale Price: 1987-2015



Above: Photo and display board from Meeting 2.



Meeting 3 - June 14, 2017: This meeting at the Wilson Middle School was held to report back to the community on the results of the MetroQuest Survey (described previously) and to elicit further discussion on goals and recommendations. Following a brief presentation, attendees could select two focus groups to attend for a more detailed discussion on goals and potential recommendations. Focus group topics included:

- + Community Character, Housing & Economic Development
- + Open Space & Cultural/Historic Resources
- + Transportation & Infrastructure
- + Public Facilities, Public Services & Education

Meeting 4 - June 20, 2018: This event, to present the draft Master Plan recommendations, was organized as an open house at the Community-Senior Center. A brief explanatory presentation was given hourly. The rest of the time, attendees could circulate freely through individual stations displaying recommendations. Stations were staffed by consultant team members knowledgeable on the topic, and attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on recommendations.

Presence at Community Events

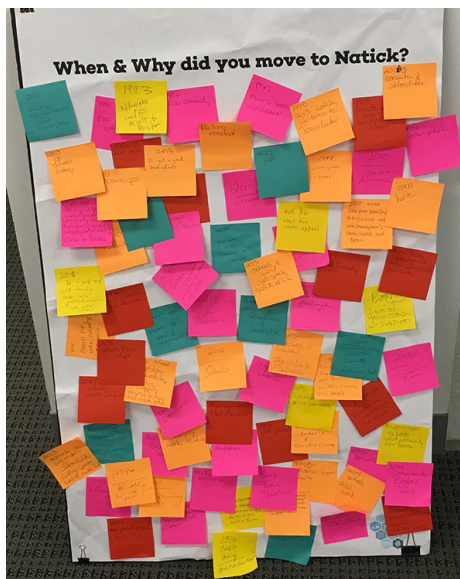
In order to reach a broad cross section of the population that wouldn't necessarily come to a community meeting about the Master Plan, the Natick 2030+ Team attended a number of community events where they provided information about the project and conducted interactive activities. At each of these events, cards with information on the Natick 2030+ website were distributed and visitors had the opportunity to fill out comment cards. Events included:

Natick Arts Walk - July 21, 2016: Cards with information about the Natick 2030+ Master Plan and website were distributed.

Natick Days - September 10, 2016: The 2030+ Team staffed a table with information about the project and visitors responded to the question "When and why did you move to Natick?"



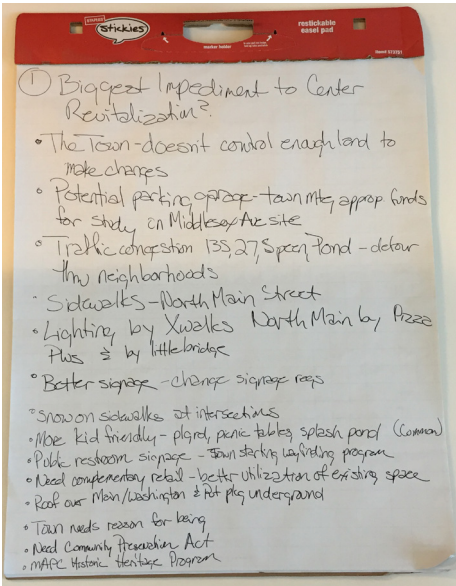
Above: Display board and photo from Meeting 3.



At left: participants filled the board with responses at Natick Days 2016.



Photo from Natick Days 2016.



Flip chart meeting notes from discussion at Natick Center Outreach Meeting.

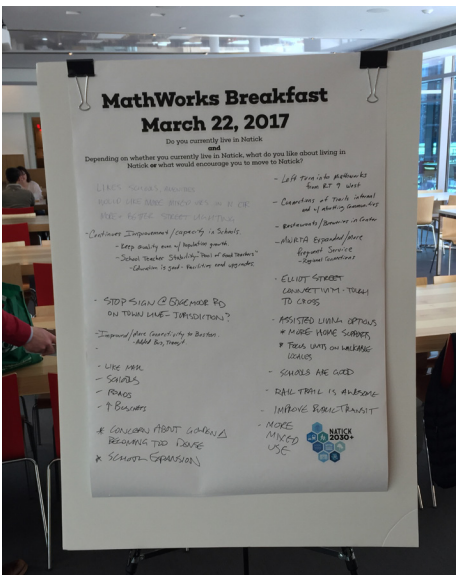
Three additional larger stakeholder meetings were held:

- + **Natick Center Outreach Meeting – March 2, 2017:** This meeting was held with Natick Center property owners and merchants, and representatives from the Natick Center Cultural District, to brief them on the project and to hear their ideas and concerns.
- + **MathWorks Breakfast - March 22, 2017:** An informal session with MathWorks employees encouraged input from people working in Natick who might not attend a public meeting.
- + **Community-Senior Center Outreach Meeting – April 13, 2017:** This meeting was held to provide an opportunity for Natick seniors to discuss their specific ideas and concerns for the future of Natick.

RoundTables

During October and November of 2017, the Natick 2030+ Team held a series of topic-specific Roundtables with local experts (including residents, Town Committee/ Board Members, and representatives of Town departments) to hash through identified issues and potential recommendations. Participants for the Roundtables were chosen because of their familiarity/expertise on the topic, as well as their ability to bring a broad perspective to the discussion. The Roundtables topics included:

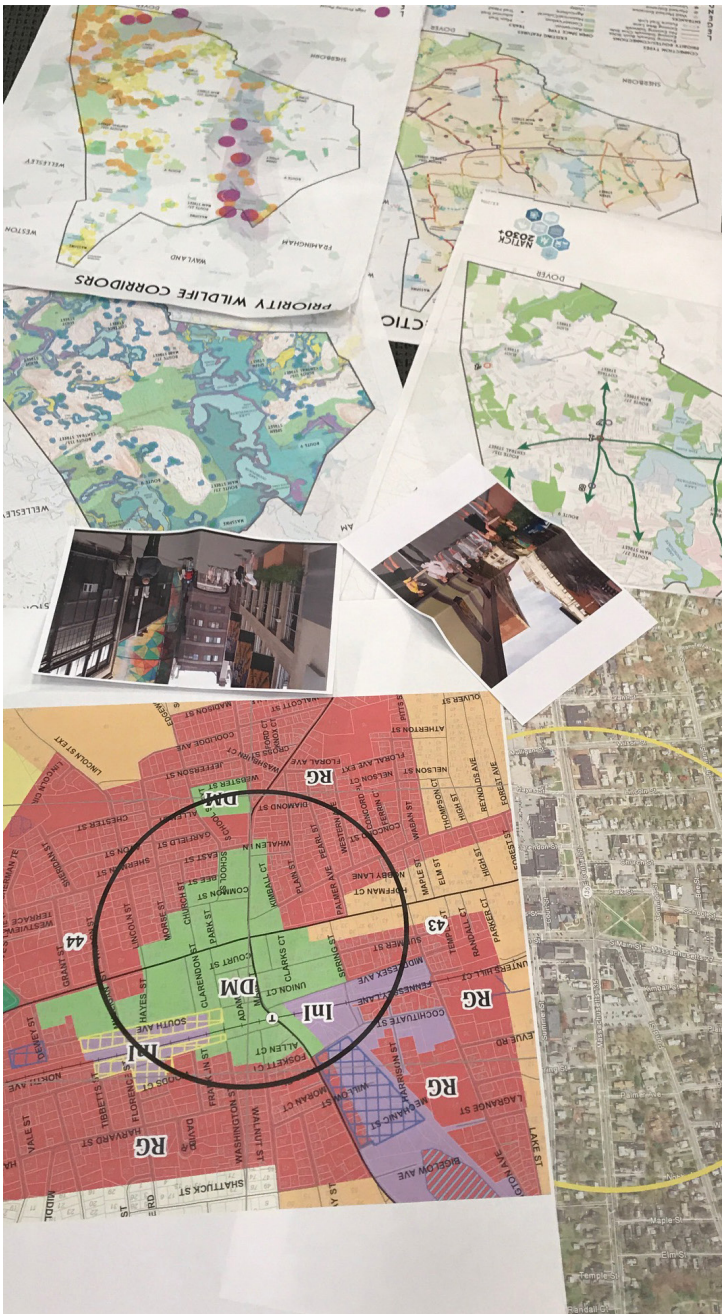
- + Historic & Cultural Resources
- + Open Space & Natural Resources
- + Transportation
- + Housing
- + Town Facilities & Services
- + Economic Development



Comments from MathWorks breakfast.

Planning Board Coordination

Throughout the project, the Planning Board had a representative on the Master Plan Advisory Committee who kept the Planning Board up to date on the project and the activities of the MPAC. In addition, the Planning Board reviewed draft work products throughout the Natick 2030+ process. Workshops were held with the Planning Board on March 17, 2018, April 3, 2018 and August 29, 2018 to discuss draft recommendations, and the Planning Board met jointly with the MPAC on August 29, 2018, November 5, 2018 and January 7, 2019 to review recommendations and the Final Plan.



Meeting graphics from Planning Board Workshops.

THE MASTER PLAN

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 (described previously) and a team of consultants. Various combinations of this group are referred to throughout the report as The Natick 2030+ Team.

The Plan is organized around the following seven topic areas, based on the elements outlined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 4, Section 81D: Master Plan:

- + Chapter 2: Demographics and housing
- + Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning
- + Chapter 4: Transportation
- + Chapter 5: Economic Development
- + Chapter 6: Natural and cultural resources
- + Chapter 7: Open space and recreation
- + Chapter 8: Public services and facilities
- + Chapter 9: Implementation

The Master Plan does not include a separate chapter on sustainability and resiliency. Rather, because they are an integral component of each of the elements, sustainability and resiliency concerns are woven through all of the chapters. Throughout The Plan, recommendations that support sustainability and resiliency are indicated with this leaf icon.



Chapters 2 through 8 begin with an inventory and analysis of existing conditions, highlighting key issues, followed by goals developed over the course of the Master Plan process and recommendations for achieving those goals. Background information sources included the Town of Natick, previous studies and reports, and state agencies. The description of existing conditions presents a snapshot of Natick as of 2017 when the Master Plan process transitioned from the existing conditions inventory and analysis phase to the development of goals and recommendations.

The Master Plan process is a multi-year process. Natick was not frozen in time – the Planning Board reviewed and approved projects, Town Meeting met and passed new budgets and by-law changes. It should be noted that in some instances the results of these actions have not been incorporated into the existing conditions described in this Plan – it is not possible for a document to remain constantly up to date in a dynamic environment. Because the Town has moved forward on a number of fronts, some recommendations discussed as part of the Master Plan process have been implemented already, or are in progress. In those cases, actions taken by the Town are highlighted next to the recommendation.

Current planning practice has moved away from the heavily physical and engineering based planning practice of the pre-1960s and more towards a practice working to address social needs, and promoting community engagement in the master plan creation and implementation process.

The Natick 2030+ Master Plan is aspirational. In keeping with current master planning best practices, the description of existing conditions does not attempt to define the current capacity of specific town services and facilities. Rather than assuming a finite capacity for facilities and services, and developing a plan to work within that capacity, today's master plans focus on defining the vision of the community – what residents would like the future of the Town to be – and laying out a plan for achieving that vision.

As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, the Natick 2030+ process began with a review of the Natick 360 documents. The Vision Statements from that process (shown below) were the result of an extensive community conversation. Those Vision Statements still very strongly represent the aspirations of the community today and formed the basis for the topic-specific goals in the following chapters.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which:

- + Natick is a healthy community of diverse and interconnected citizens, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods, where citizens of all ages, backgrounds and income levels can live, work and thrive;
- + Natick's natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community;
- + Natick Center is the vibrant core of the community, a unique and accessible destination for commerce, community and culture, day and night;
- + Natick's public schools and programs are recognized as among the best;
- + Natick's self-government, supported by informed and engaged citizens, is fiscally sound, delivers services efficiently and communicates effectively with the public;
- + Natick's public infrastructure and buildings fulfill their function efficiently and effectively to the satisfaction of the community, and are maintained in good working order;
- + Natick is a desirable and accessible destination that marshals local and regional partners and resources to solve problems and enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

One new statement was added to address sustainability and resiliency, a topic that has grown in importance since the Natick 360 process:

- + Natick's residents, businesses, and government adhere to the highest standards for sustainable practices across all sectors and are well-equipped as a resilient community to respond, withstand and recover from adverse situations.



2. Demographics and Housing

KEY FINDINGS

- + Between 2000 and 2010, the Town's population increased three percent, from 32,170 to 33,006 people.
- + The median household income in Natick is \$98,902.
- + Approximately 61 percent (8,878) of Natick's 14,459 housing units are detached single family units.
- + The median single family sales price in 2015 was \$521,000; the median condominium sales price was \$268,000.
- + The average single family tax bill in 2015 was \$6,630.

Introduction

Natick's industrial past provides key information for understanding the physical development pattern in the Town. Pre-1900 commercial and residential development was concentrated in the downtown area, with the commercial core surrounded by homes. Housing development during the industrial period placed workers close to their jobs. Village development occurred in South Natick, with significant social and civic components. During the twentieth century with the proliferation of the automobile, development began to spread across the Town. New areas of commercial development emerged, particularly along Route 9, accompanied by widely dispersed residential development. Natick's suburbanization and transformation into a bedroom community between 1945 and 1965 were essential components of making Natick the Town it is today. The rise of postwar retail (starting with Sherwood Plaza and the Natick Industrial Park) was heavily influenced by new housing development both within and around Natick.

Today, Natick is a vibrant community with significant commercial nodes and well-established neighborhoods. Its strategic location, public amenities, great schools, and low commercial tax rate make Natick a desirable place to live.

Existing Conditions

Background

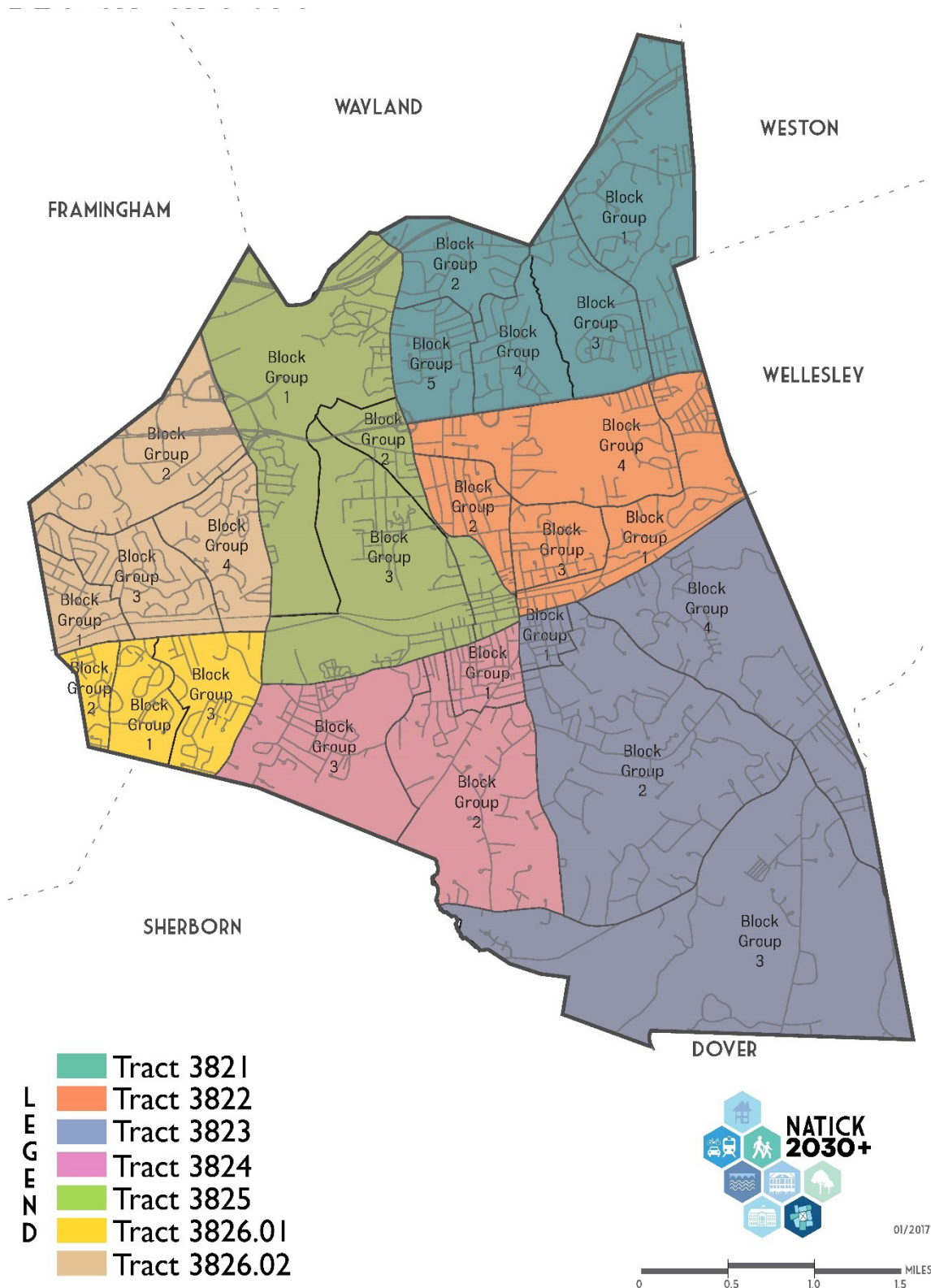
Placing local conditions and trends in the context of a larger geography helps to shed light on a community's relationship to its surroundings. For purposes of this plan, four communities have been selected as nearby comparison towns: Framingham, Holliston, Needham, and Wellesley. The larger MetroWest region and the state as a whole have also been used for some comparisons.¹ The accompanying map shows Natick at the Census Tract and Block Group level: geographies that help to understand demographic and housing differences within Natick. It should be noted, however, that Census Tracts and Block Groups do not necessarily represent homogeneous population or building characteristics.

Population

Natick is a maturely developed suburb, but it is still growing and changing. Between 2000 and 2010, the Town's population increased 3 percent, from 32,170 to 33,006 people.² Compared with its neighbors, Natick grew at a greater rate than all except Wellesley, which grew by 5 percent. The population is expected to grow further in the coming years as more people make Natick their home. This is in contrast to the period between 1970 and 1990, where Natick experienced a decline in population. While the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) forecasts a 1 percent population increase in Natick between 2010 and 2030, from 33,006 to 33,433 people, the

1 MetroWest Region is composed of: Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Marlborough, Natick, Southborough, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston. The definition of this geography was determined by Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for Boston.

2 Census 2000 and Census 2010, Summary File 1, P1, Total Population.



MAP 2.1: BLOCK GROUP LOCATIONS IN NATICK

This map shows the boundaries of the Census Block Groups that make up the Town of Natick.

Massachusetts State Data Center predicts that Natick’s population could increase by as much as 7 percent in the same period.³ While there is a disparity in population projections, the overall trend is that of growth, ultimately requiring the Town to plan for its future.

The population increase that Natick is likely to experience will require significant decisions on the part of the Town. Demographers and economists at the University of Massachusetts estimate that as the large millennial generation ages into its thirties over the next decade, household formation rates will rise in just about all of the suburbs along the fringe of the Boston metro area. The added increase in population will have a direct impact on housing, both in terms of demand and availability, and on infrastructure, Town facilities and services, and schools. Demand for multi-family housing is expected to be greater in the future.

GEOGRAPHY	2000	2010	2020	2025	2030	00 - 10 (%)	10 - 30 (%)
Framingham	66,910	68,318	73,070	74,084	75,027	2%	10%
Holliston	13,801	13,547	13,283	12,937	12,524	-2%	-8%
NATICK	32,170	33,006	34,823	35,020	35,171	3%	7%
Needham	28,911	28,886	29,610	28,974	28,539	0%	-1%
Wellesley	26,613	27,982	29,647	29,323	28,340	5%	1%

TABLE 2.1: POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS, NATICK AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Source: Metro Boston Population and Housing Data, UMass Donohue Institute, Long-term Population Projections for Massachusetts Municipalities, & RKG Associates, Inc.

Population Age

Table 2.2 reports the distribution of age groups in Natick and the surrounding towns. The largest population segment in Natick consists of people under 18 years, an age group that accounts for nearly 24 percent of the total population (7,287 people). Seniors – defined here as the population 65 years and over – also are an important demographic in Natick. Population estimates from the Census Bureau indicate that seniors comprise about 15 percent of Natick’s population, and only Needham, which has significant active and assisted living facilities, has a larger percentage of seniors than the comparison communities. An especially important age group in all of these communities is the population 35 to 54 years old: people in their prime earning years and who contribute significantly to the local economy. Their housing choices and spending habits have a direct impact on the town. They typically have school-age children, too, so school quality is an important driver in the decisions they make about where they will live.

Further investigating the population by age data at the census tract level shows that across nearly all of Natick, the population by age group is distributed similarly across census tracts. The census tract which stands out is 3826.01, located in southwest Natick bordering Framingham and bounded by West Central and Speen Streets. This tract maintains a significantly larger percentage (40%) of residents that are between 25 and 44 years old.⁴

3

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Projections, Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections 2014, and UMass Donohue Institute Population Projections Program, Massachusetts Population Projections 2010 to 2035. MAPC projections assume “status quo” growth (or loss).

4

ACS 2010-2014, Table B01001, “Age.”

	FRAMINGHAM	HOLLISTON	NATICK	NEEDHAM	WELLESLEY	METROWEST	MASSACHUSETTS
Total Population	69,900	14,008	34,230	29,540	28,858	237,989	6,657,291
Under 18	21%	27%	24%	27%	27%	24%	21%
18 to 24 years	10%	5%	5%	6%	17%	9%	10%
25 to 34 years	15%	7%	11%	7%	4%	11%	13%
35 to 44 years	14%	15%	15%	13%	11%	14%	13%
45 to 54 years	14%	18%	17%	15%	15%	16%	15%
55 to 64 years	12%	14%	13%	14%	11%	13%	13%
65+ years	14%	14%	15%	17%	14%	14%	14%

TABLE 2.2: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP: NATICK AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2010-2014), Table B01001, "Age", and RKG Associates, Inc.

Race and Ethnicity

Like other Boston-area suburbs, Natick is becoming a more diverse community. While the Town is still 87 percent white, demographic changes have resulted in an increased Latino population. Natick's Latino population has risen more than 26 percent, from just 635 people in 2000 to almost 798 in 2014.⁵ To some extent, the minority population changes that have occurred in Natick go hand-in-hand with an increase in foreign-born residents. The overall foreign-born population for Natick is currently estimated at 4,745 people, and they represent nearly 14 percent of the total population. Natick has the second largest percentage of foreign-born residents among the immediate comparison communities (second to Framingham).⁶ Both the MetroWest region and state have higher foreign-born population percentages than Natick (19 and 15 percent, respectively). Table 2.3 provides a breakdown of the race and ethnicity of residents of Natick and the comparison communities.

	FRAMINGHAM	HOLLISTON	NATICK	NEEDHAM	WELLESLEY	METROWEST	MASSACHUSETTS
Total Population	69,900	14,008	34,230	29,540	28,858	237,989	6,657,291
White	75%	95%	87%	88%	83%	82%	80%
Black	8%	1%	2%	2%	2%	4%	7%
American Indian	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	7%	2%	9%	7%	11%	8%	6%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Race	5%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	4%
Two + Races	4%	1%	2%	3%	2%	4%	3%
Hispanic Origin	14%	3%	3%	3%	5%	8%	10%

TABLE 2.3: RACE AND ETHNICITY: NATICK AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES:

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2010-2014), Tables B02001, "Race", B03002, "Hispanic of Latin Origin", and RKG Associates, Inc.

⁵ Census 2000, Summary File, DP-1, "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics", ACS 2010-2014, B03002, "Hispanic or Latino Origin."

⁶ ACS 2010-2014, B05012, "Nativity."

Further examining the Town at the census tract level, it becomes apparent that Asians are the most dominant minority across nearly all census tracts. Town-wide, Asians account for about 8 percent of the total population.⁷ The largest concentration of Asian population is found in census tract 3826.01, which is in southwest Natick. The area in general has a significant minority population, but Asians account for 22 percent of the total population in this census tract. Asians are a significant minority within the Town, but are significantly under-represented in Town Meetings.

Education

Overall the population of Natick is highly educated as compared to the rest of the Commonwealth. Natick is home to major technology companies, MathWorks and Cognex, and is also in close proximity to a number of other companies near Framingham and the Route 128 corridor. Based on an advantageous geographic location in the MetroWest region and with commuter rail access to Boston, the Town has become a community for working professionals.

Based on data provided by the ACS, nearly 66 percent of individuals over the age of 25 have educations of at least a Bachelor’s degree, as compared to the Commonwealth with 40 percent.⁸ The comparison communities have similar educational levels as Natick, with some having greater concentrations of individuals with graduate and professional degrees. The strong human capital base that Natick possesses is a great asset for the Town, as highly educated individuals are typically well-paid and have the disposable income to generate sales tax revenue for the Town.

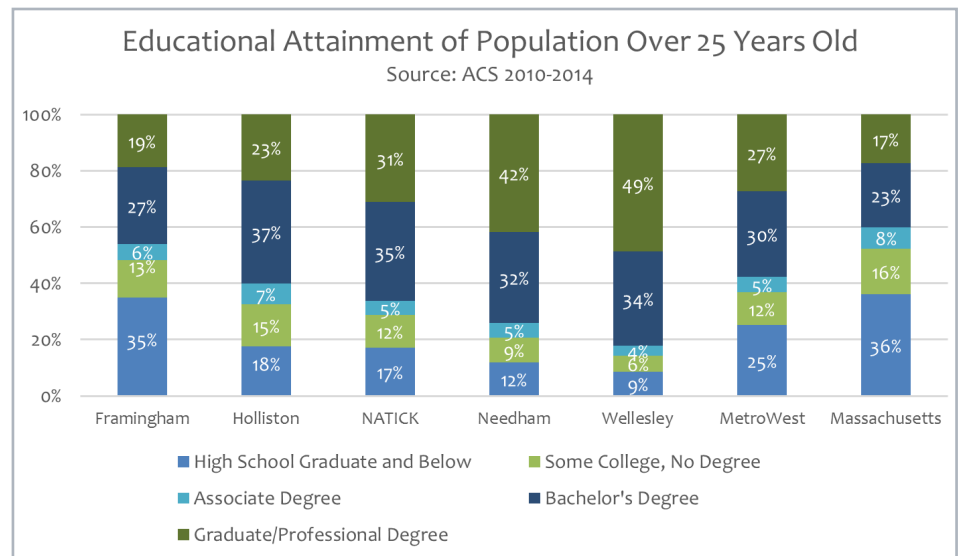


FIGURE 2.1: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Household Trends

The federal Census Bureau defines “household” as one or more people living in a housing unit, so “household” can include a variety of living arrangements. Natick is expected to experience considerable household growth over the next two decades.

7 ACS 2010-2014, B02001 and B03002, “Race” and “Hispanic or Latino Origin.”

8 ACS 2010-2014, B15003, “Education.”

Some of the growth can be attributed to the elderly households downsizing and properties being sold to families with children. According to estimates from MAPC, the number of households in Natick could increase by as much as 10 percent between 2010 and 2030, from 13,406 to 14,714 (an increase of 1,308).⁹ Natick's projected household growth rate exceeding its population growth rate is no surprise. It echoes the nation's long-term trend toward smaller households. The projected growth in households highlights the importance of having an adequate housing supply to meet demand. The relationship between housing supply and demand is important because if a significant under-supply exists, prices will increase, eroding the ability of households to choose Natick as a place to live.

Household Income

Household income directly influences the ability of residents to support their families, local businesses, and town services. Lower household incomes can equate to a lower threshold for spending on housing and goods and services while people with higher income households can afford to spend more. The median household income in Natick, \$98,902, is at the lower end of the comparison communities.¹⁰ The economic position of Natick households is generally high, though not as high as their counterparts in Holliston, Needham, and Wellesley. Compared to the state median income of \$67,846, Natick as a community retains a significant amount of affluence.

	FRAMINGHAM	HOLLISTON	NATICK	NEEDHAM	WELLESLEY	METROWEST	MASSACHUSETTS
Households	26,724	5,028	14,044	10,536	8,594	88,907	2,538,485
<\$15,000	12%	5%	6%	6%	3%	7%	11%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	9%	9%	6%	3%	6%	7%	9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	8%	5%	6%	2%	2%	6%	8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	10%	9%	9%	6%	4%	9%	11%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	14%	8%	14%	10%	9%	13%	16%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12%	11%	9%	12%	9%	11%	13%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	19%	21%	21%	17%	14%	18%	17%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	9%	14%	14%	14%	16%	12%	8%
\$200,000+	6%	18%	15%	30%	38%	17%	8%
Median HH Income	\$68,881	\$108,350	\$98,902	\$129,154	\$159,615	\$122,530	\$67,846

TABLE 2.4: HOUSEHOLD INCOME: NATICK AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2010-2014), Table B19001, "Household Income", Table B19013, "Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2014 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)," and RKG Associates, Inc.

⁹ MAPC Projections, 2016.

¹⁰ ACS 2010-2014, B19013, "Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2014 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)."

Of the census tracts located in Natick, the tract with the highest median income is tract 3823, located in southeast Natick, adjacent to Wellesley, Dover, and Sherborn, and bounded by East Central and Cottage streets. The median income of this area is \$114,396, with 24 percent of its residents having incomes of greater than \$200,000 per annum. The tract with the lowest median income is tract 3826.01, which is in southwest Natick, and has a median income of \$69,801. Interestingly, the lowest median income census tract in Natick was higher than the median incomes of both Framingham and the Commonwealth. The difference between the highest and lowest median income in Natick is 64 percent, a large disparity in income. Some

of the explanation for the acute difference is that tract 3823 has a vastly different housing stock and built environment that is composed of large mansion style housing. Tract 3826.01 is adjacent to Framingham, a historically more affordable city, and has a built environment composed of multi-family rental units set within a suburban commercial district, and younger households than other parts of town.

Housing Characteristics

Housing Stock

Natick is like other Boston area suburbs in that its most common housing type is the detached single family home. Approximately 61 percent (8,878) of Natick's 14,459 housing units are detached single family units.¹¹ In addition, Natick has a significant inventory of multi-family units, including apartment and condominium structures of three units or more, which together account for almost 27 percent (1,534) of all units in the town.¹² The diversified housing stock is both a strength and weakness because while there are housing options, the entry price point for both for-sale and rental housing is high. Those who can afford to live in Natick do have options which span from apartments to condos and single family homes. New high-end developments, such as Modera at Natick Center or Nouvelle (pictured) by the Natick Mall, offer significant housing options and amenities for those able to afford them. Moderately priced, or permanently affordable units, are found in locations such as Natick Village.



Nouvelle at Natick Collection

Table 2.5 shows Natick having a larger percentage of multi-family units than any of the comparison communities except for Framingham. Within Natick, nearly 17 percent of the housing units are located in structures that have 10 or more units.¹³ These findings parallel those of the MetroWest Region. The existing supply of multi-family housing in Natick provides an opportunity for new residents and young families to live in Natick while not having to purchase a single family home. In the other comparison communities, particularly Holliston and Wellesley, single family homes are the predominant housing type and account for greater than 80 percent of all units.

At the census tract level, it is apparent that census tract 3826.01 holds the majority of Natick's multi-family housing. Table 2.6 shows that single family homes account for only 15 percent of total housing units in Tract 3826.01, and 50 percent of the housing units are in developments of 10 units or more. This census tract is also the most racially and economically diverse. Tract 3821 has the least multi-family housing, with 90 percent of its housing stock listed as single family homes. Single family homes in the remaining tracts range from 53 to 72 percent, indicating that multi-family homes are spread around the community.

Demand for housing in Natick will continue to grow in the near and long term future. Based on projections by MAPC, in the short-term Natick is expected to experience a growth in housing of 4 percent between 2010 and 2020; while over the long-term, between 2010 and 2030, the Town is set to experience housing unit growth of 9 percent, with the greatest demand for multi-family housing.¹⁴ Of all the comparison communities, Natick is expected to grow at the fastest rate. The expected increased demand for housing in Natick between 2010 and 2030 is 1,262 units. This is an important metric for the Town to consider because determining the type, size, and location of new housing will have impacts on existing residents and community character.

11

ACS 2010-2014, Table B25024, "Housing Units."

12

ACS 2010-2014, B25024, "Units in Structure."

13

Ibid.

14

MAPC Population and Housing Demand Projections, 2014.

	FRAMINGHAM	HOLLISTON	NATICK	NEEDHAM	WELLESLEY	METROWEST	MASSACHUSETTS
Housing Units	27,550	5,077	14,459	10,829	9,105	92,544	2,816,875
Units - 1, detached	51%	81%	61%	76%	80%	61%	52%
Units - 1, attached	4%	2%	5%	4%	3%	5%	5%
Units - 2	7%	3%	6%	6%	2%	6%	10%
Units - 3 or 4	8%	3%	4%	2%	3%	6%	11%
Units - 5 to 9	6%	4%	6%	2%	3%	5%	6%
Units - 10 to 19	5%	1%	7%	2%	2%	5%	4%
Units - 20 to 49	5%	2%	4%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Units - 50 or more	14%	4%	6%	6%	4%	8%	6%
Units - Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%

TABLE 2.5: UNITS IN STRUCTURE: NATICK AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2010-2014), Table B25024, "Units in Structure"

	TRACT 3821	TRACT 3822	TRACT 3823	TRACT 3824	TRACT 3825	TRACT 3826.01	TRACT 3826.02
Housing Units	1,909	2,079	2,259	1,992	1,931	2,395	1,894
Units - 1, detached	90%	72%	73%	64%	53%	15%	72%
Units - 1, attached	4%	2%	9%	9%	2%	5%	5%
Units - 2	0%	12%	7%	11%	12%	2%	1%
Units - 3 or 4	0%	8%	9%	5%	5%	2%	1%
Units - 5 to 9	0%	2%	0%	3%	3%	25%	2%
Units - 10 to 19	1%	2%	0%	5%	3%	33%	1%
Units - 20 to 49	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%	14%	1%
Units - 50 or more	5%	0%	0%	1%	18%	3%	17%
Units - Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

TABLE 2.6: UNITS IN STRUCTURE: NATICK AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2010-2014), Table B25024, "Units in Structure"

GEOGRAPHY	2010	2020	2030	10 - 20	10 - 20 (%)	10 - 30	10 - 30 (%)
Framingham	27,529	28,738	29,837	1,209	4%	2,308	8%
Holliston	5,087	5,311	5,350	224	4%	263	5%
NATICK	14,121	14,694	15,383	573	4%	1,262	9%
Needham	11,122	11,293	12,052	171	2%	930	8%
Wellesley	9,189	9,345	9,526	156	2%	337	4%

TABLE 2.7: COMPARATIVE HOUSING UNIT TRENDS 2010-2030

Source: MAPC Projections, Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections 2014

Age of Housing

The arrival of industry in the Town during the nineteenth century led to the growth of residential development. Initially residential development was concentrated in the historic downtown and South Natick area. However, over the course of time and with the creation of more employment nodes throughout the Town, housing spread throughout the Town. The accompanying map depicts the residential development patterns found in Natick since the turn of the twentieth century. What is apparent from the map is that during the era between 1900 and 1940, large swaths of housing were built and coincided with commercial development along Route 9. This residential pattern was facilitated by the proliferation of the automobile and the multiple commercial nodes that developed throughout the Town. Much of the new development that is occurring in Natick results from in-fill development and the creation of mixed-use projects that incorporate both residential and commercial components.

Compared with surrounding towns, Natick has fairly new housing. About 28 percent of the housing was built after 1980 (total of 3,966 units) with 8 percent being built since 2000, the largest percent concentration of the neighboring communities.¹⁵ Another interesting aspect of Natick's housing stock is that 54 percent was built before 1959, indicating that the town experienced significant growth and expansion in the past.

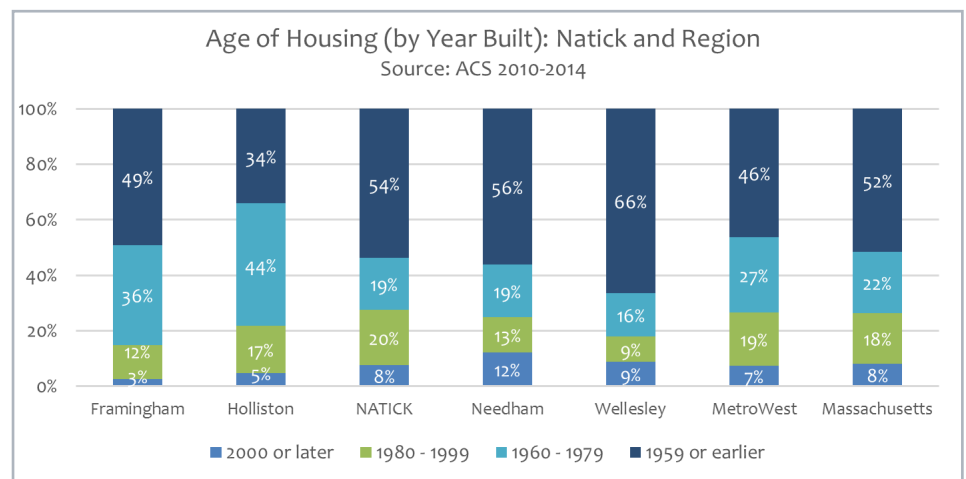
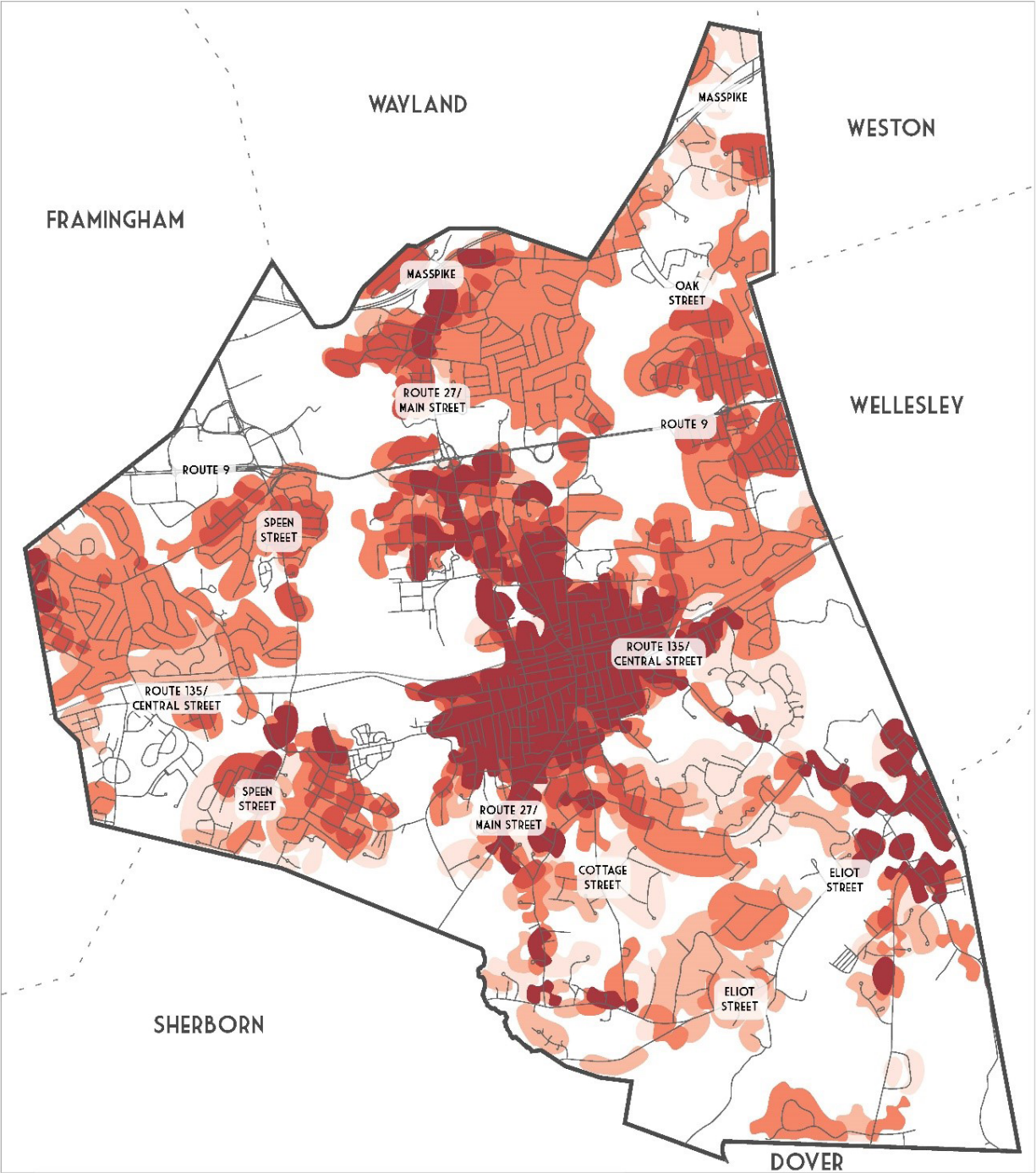


FIGURE 2.2: AGE OF HOUSING

The age of housing stock can tell the story of development patterns and design. Many of the older housing units are desirable because they have first floor master bedrooms, something which is lacking in more recently developed units. The disparity of housing stock age in Natick is quite drastic at the census tract level. Tract 3826.01 has by far the largest percentage of housing built after 1959, at 92 percent. In this tract, the overwhelming majority of housing was built between the years 1960 and 2000. This census tract has a number of multi-family housing developments such as Natick Village Apartments, Kendall Crossing Apartments, and Natick Green Condominiums, all of which are relatively more mature and affordable than the newer developments.

15

ACS 2010-2014, B25034, "Year Structure Built."



- LEGEND**
- Built before 1900
 - Built between 1901 - 1940
 - Built between 1941 - 1970
 - Built between 1971 - 1990
 - Built between 1991 - 2016



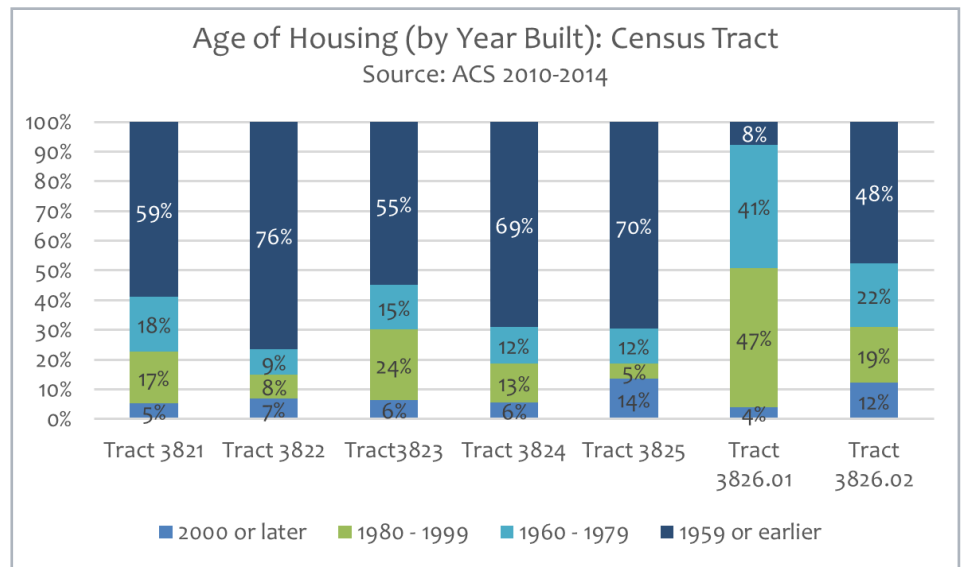
XX/2016



MAP 2.2: AGE OF HOUSING IN NATICK

This map shows the age of housing and general residential development patterns across the Town.

Tract 3825, located around Lake Cochituate and adjacent to Natick Mall, has the largest percentage of housing built after the year 2000 (14 percent); the second largest percentage is in tract 3826.02 (12 percent). The presence of newer housing around the mall coincides with the development trend of repositioning assets such as a mall into a center that is “live, work, and play.” New developments are Nouvelle at Natick Residence, Avalon Natick, and the Cloverleaf Apartments. These developments offer housing and amenities at signify high price points. This emerging trend is important for the ongoing success of this area, known as The Golden Triangle, and the Town’s finances.



A home in Natick.

FIGURE 2.3: AGE OF HOUSING (TRACTS)

Tenure

Natick has more owner-occupied housing than rental housing. Based on data from the ACS, nearly 71 percent of the housing stock is owner-occupied and 26 percent is rental; placing Natick between Framingham and its wealthier neighbors. A high percentage of owner-occupied units is common for suburban communities that have a majority of housing stock composed of single family homes. Compared to the neighboring communities, with the exception of Framingham, Natick maintains a high percentage of rental housing stock. Framingham maintains 43 percent of its housing stock as rental, which makes sense given the abundance of affordable and multi-family housing available. Within the larger geography, Natick lags behind both the MetroWest Region and the Commonwealth in terms of rental housing. However, with the continued development of new multi-family housing stock in Natick, measurable increases in rental housing will be felt into the future.

The census tracts that have the greatest percentage of rental housing were tracts 3825 (40%) and 3826.01 (39%). Census tract 3825 is located near the mall and encompasses Lake Cochituate, while census tract 3826.01 is in southwest Natick. These tracts have higher concentrations of multi-family housing because they are in areas less likely to detract from the single family character of adjacent Natick neighborhoods. These areas are close to commercial districts, which are also zoned

for multi-family housing. Some of the developments in this area include Avalon Natick, Cloverleaf Apartments, and Natick Village Apartments.

Map 2.3 illustrates the ratio of owner-occupied housing to renter-occupied housing in Natick. One key aspect to note in Natick is that, typical of suburban communities, there are not many single family rental homes - these units tend to be owner-occupied. Areas on the map with significant imbalances include South Natick which has a severe lack of multi-family housing and an abundance of single family units. Areas such as Natick Center, the historical heart of the community, and West Natick, near Framingham, have lower ratios and greater numbers of multi-family housing units.

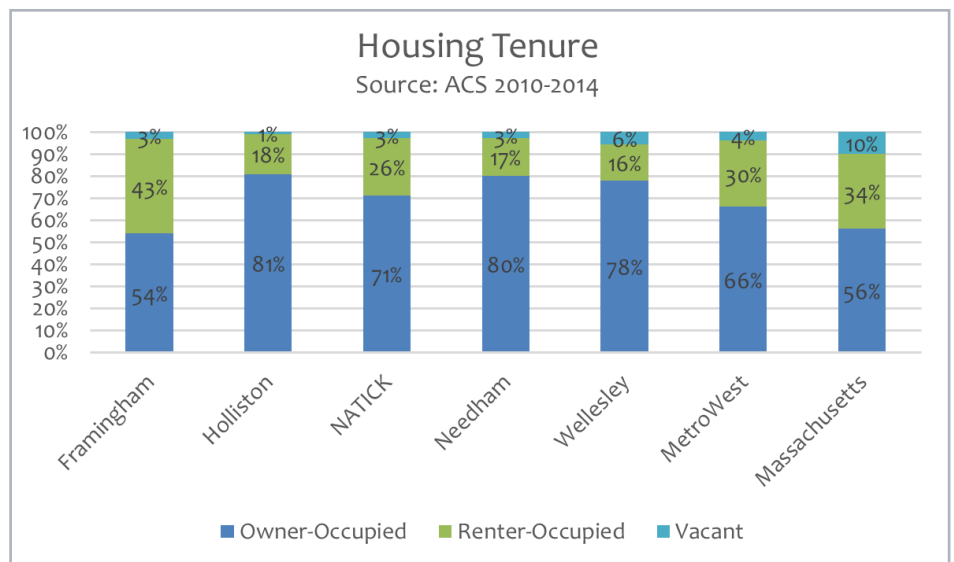


FIGURE 2.4: HOUSING TENURE

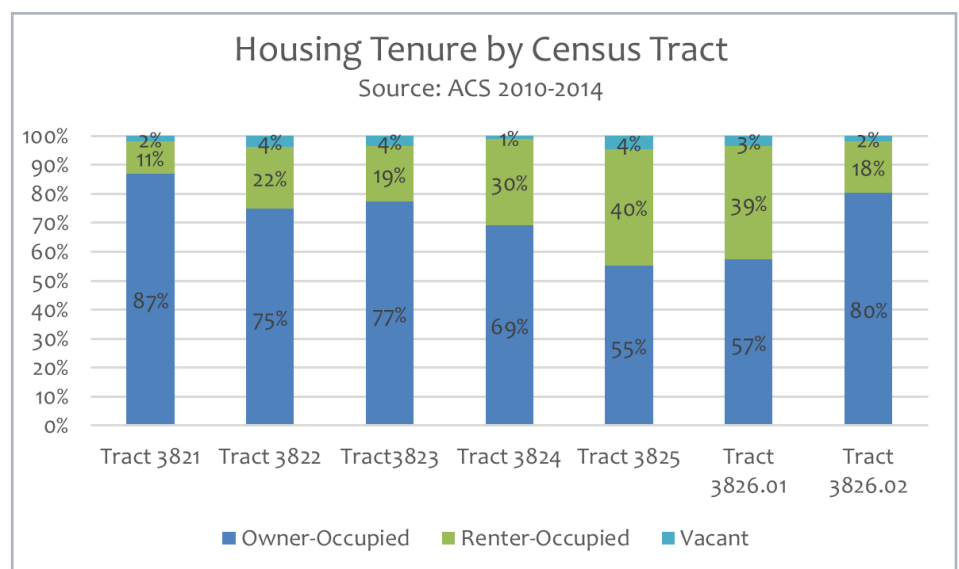
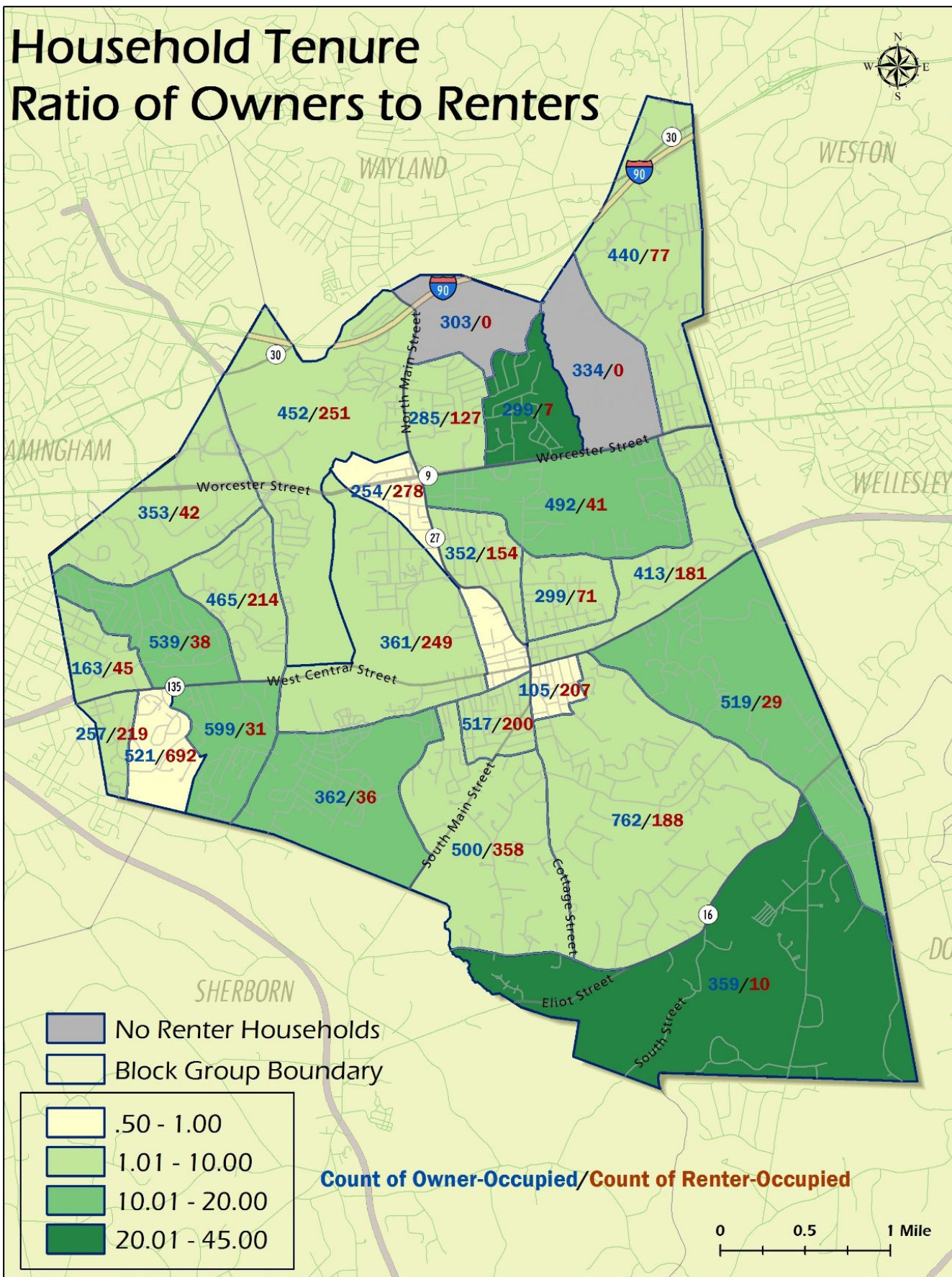


FIGURE 2.5: HOUSING TENURE (TRACTS)



MAP 2.3: HOUSING TENURE BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP

This map shows the ratio of owner occupied households to renter households in each Census Block Group.



A single family home in Natick

Financial Characteristics of Housing in Natick

Single Family Homes

Single family homes make up the majority of housing units in Natick. Table 2.8 provides a snapshot of Natick’s single family home inventory, based on data from the assessor’s office. Today, Natick has a total of 8,517 single family units, of which 46 percent are three bedroom units and 45 percent have four or more bedrooms;¹⁶ this has implications for school populations. As Natick grew over the last few decades, the size and value of its single family homes also grew.

The market for single family homes in Natick is quite strong. Based on data provided by the Warren Group in 2015, the median sales price was \$521,000 with a total of 363 sales. The median sales price of homes in Natick is quite competitive and in some cases lower than the surrounding communities. Between 2006 and 2015, the median sales price of a home in Natick increased by three percent. The communities that have highest single family sales values are Wellesley and Needham, with respective median sales values of \$1,177,250 and \$840,000. The comparison communities that surround Natick have historically been desirable communities for families, with excellent schools. The relative affordability in Natick, combined with its proximity to Boston and excellent school system, drives demand for housing; it is expected that this trend will continue based on population and housing projections.

UNITS	COUNT	COUNT %	AVERAGE YEAR BUILT	AVERAGE STRUC-TURE AGE	AVERAGE LIVING AREA (SQ. FT.)	AVERAGE AS-SESSED VALUE
1 BR	55	1%	1933	83	961	\$322,856
2 BR	715	8%	1935	81	1,298	\$384,389
3 BR	3,947	46%	1945	71	1,731	\$452,356
4+ BR	3,791	45%	1960	56	2,655	\$640,246
Studio/BR not reported	9	0%	1970	46	1,646	\$604,944
Grand Total	8,517	100%	1951	65	2,101	\$529,607

TABLE 2.8. NATICK HOUSING INVENTORY: SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, 2016

Source: Natick Assessor’s Parcel Database, 2016

Map 2.4 presents the most recent qualified sales prices for single family residences.¹⁷ The map illustrates how single family home sales prices are distributed throughout Natick. The concentrations of sales location, in the north and central portion of Natick, are especially telling as this area hosts much of the new housing construction.

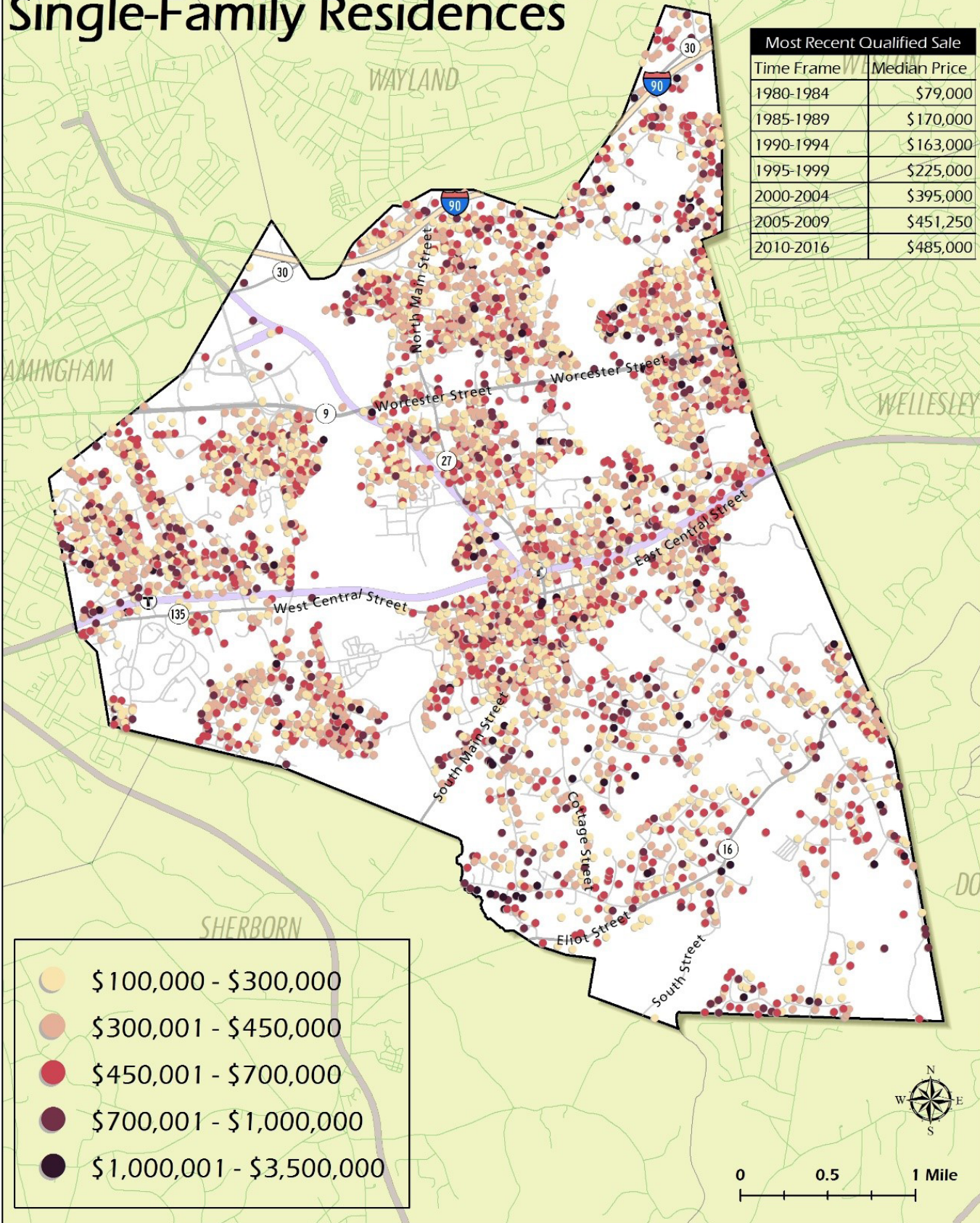
16

Natick Assessor, 2016. Assessor housing units do not equal ACS estimates because the assessor uses actual unit counts while the ACS is based on estimates.

17

Qualified sales are transactions in which the sales price of a property is reflective of actual market value. Data from qualified sales came from the assessor’s database.

Most Recent Qualified Sale Prices Single-Family Residences



MAP 2.4: QUALIFIED SALE PRICES BY YEAR SOLD

This map shows the location, sale price, and year sold of single family residential properties in Natick.

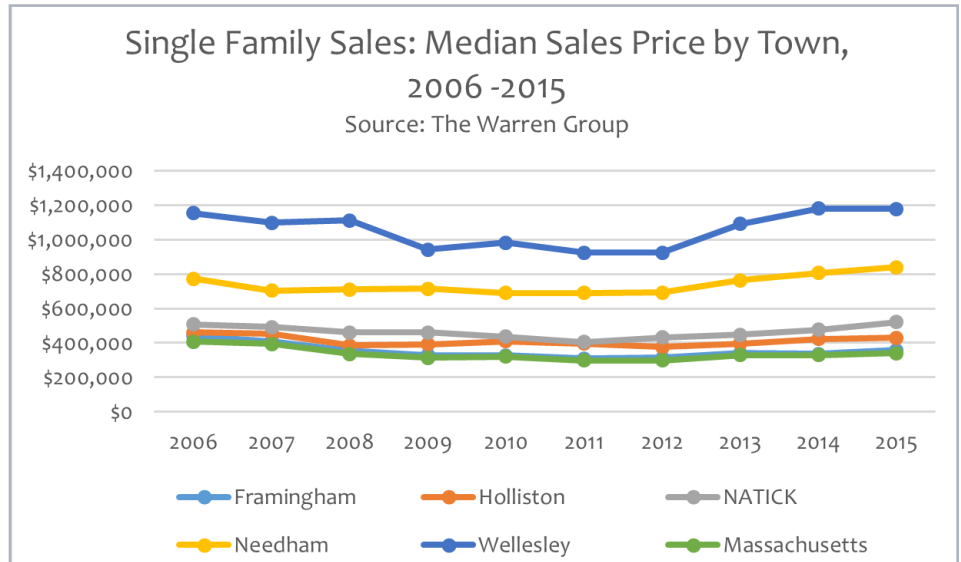


FIGURE 2.6: MEDIAN SINGLE FAMILY SALE PRICE

Condominiums

Condominium developments exist in various locations around the Town, mostly near major commercial areas and downtown. Condominium units differ from single family homes in that they offer the setting of two-family (e.g. Fairway Estates) or clustered multi-family housing but with an ownership component. Condos are typically sold in one or two-bedroom configurations and marketed to young professionals or small families. In 2015, the median sale price for the 165 condominiums that sold in Natick was \$268,000.¹⁸ In 2010, Natick had its highest recorded count of condominium sales with 232 units sold. The median price for a condominium in Natick is significantly less than that of a single family home. A key finding is that the price differential is attractive to young families and first time homebuyers looking to move to Natick.

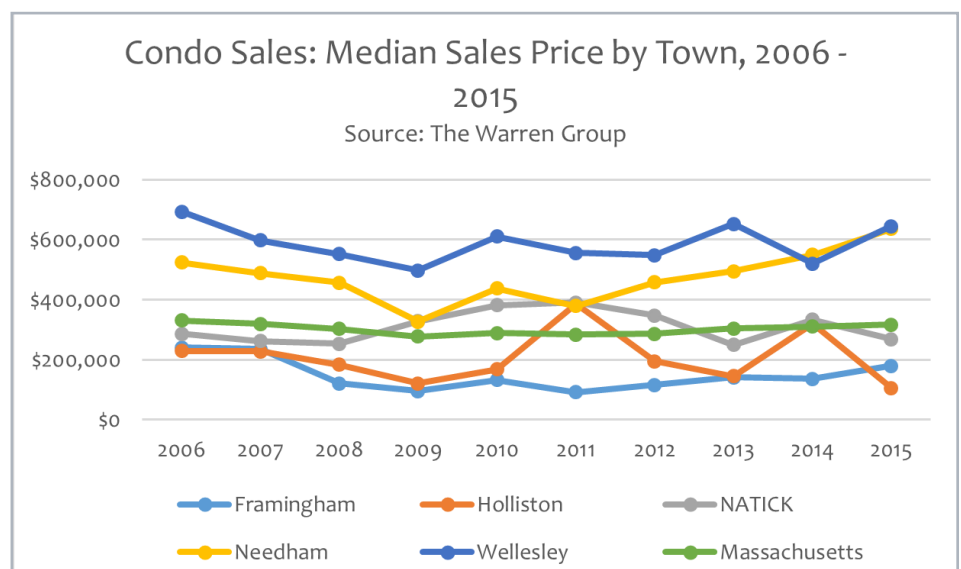


FIGURE 2.7: MEDIAN CONDOMINIUM SALE PRICE

Compared to the surrounding communities, condominium sales prices in Natick are very competitive. In 2015, both Wellesley and Needham had higher median sales values for condominiums, with respective values of \$645,000 and \$636,000. The relatively moderate price for a condo unit enables easier entry into the housing market for younger individuals and families.

Homes For Sale in Natick

Data taken from the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), showed that housing stock built in different eras have different median sales prices. The era with the greatest median sales price spans between 1990 and 2015, with a median sales price of \$856,560.¹⁹ This makes sense because new developments tend to have higher-end finishes and are targeted towards the upper end of the market, and because ordinary wear-and-tear found in older units is minimized.

The dramatic jump in median sales price for homes constructed after 1970 is quite apparent. The percent difference between the sales prices for a home constructed before 1970 and between 1970 and 1990 is greater than 50 percent, or about \$200,000. Older homes would require many updates and renovations on the part of the homeowners.

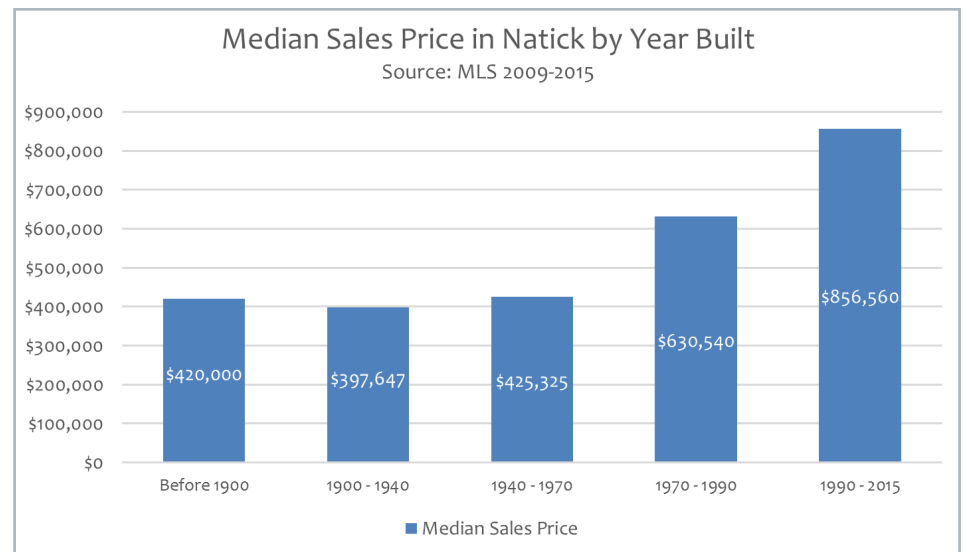


FIGURE 2.8: MEDIAN SALE PRICE BY YEAR

Desirability of a home can also be measured based on the number of bedrooms available. Within Natick during 2015, the majority of homes sold were either three (36 percent) or four bedroom (49 percent) units. Mansion style housing with bedroom counts of five or more accounted for a very small percentage of total sales, as did units with two or less bedrooms. It appears that there is significant appetite for buyers to acquire larger size properties, typically single family homes. The implications of this trend is that larger families will have an impact on the schools.

19 Data from MLS 2009-2015 was used for the analysis. Data includes both single family and condominium units.



Modera development in Natick

Rental Housing

The availability and pricing of rental housing is important because rental units offer choices to people relocating to an area. Natick has a robust rental market; the supply is made up primarily of multi-family developments, while single family homes contribute only slightly to the overall rental stock base. Recent estimates place Natick’s renter-occupied single family inventory at 498 units.²⁰ In 2015, the average monthly rent on a single family home in Natick was \$2,569, which places Natick in the middle of the pack of comparison communities.²¹ Between 2011 and 2015, Natick’s average single family rent increased by only 9 percent - much slower than in the surrounding communities.

GEOGRAPHY	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	11 - 15
Framingham	\$2,082	\$2,155	\$2,178	\$2,194	\$2,303	10%
Natick	\$2,329	\$2,362	\$2,381	\$2,393	\$2,569	9%
Needham	\$3,004	\$3,009	\$2,934	\$3,280	\$3,554	15%
Wellesley	\$3,903	\$3,925	\$3,998	\$4,537	\$5,023	22%
Holliston	\$2,169	\$2,261	\$2,275	\$2,267	\$2,414	10%

TABLE 2.9. AVERAGE SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE RENT (INflation ADJUSTED TO 2016)

Source: Zillow, 2016

Rent prices in multi-family apartment developments have escalated significantly over the past five years. This is true for Natick and all of the surrounding towns. To some extent, growth in asking rents is the direct result of higher-end rental product being built, paired with a lack of supply and increased demand. In 2015, the average monthly rent in a multi-family residence in Natick was \$2,089, in the middle of comparison communities. Between 2011 and 2015, Natick’s average multi-family unit rent increased by only 23 percent, which was a greater percent change than all the communities except Needham. The sharp increase in rent indicates that demand and supply factors are influencing the price of rental housing stock.

GEOGRAPHY	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	11 - 15
Framingham	\$1,451	\$1,554	\$1,567	\$1,620	\$1,718	16%
Natick	\$1,602	\$1,789	\$1,829	\$1,929	\$2,089	23%
Needham	\$2,185	\$2,316	\$2,434	\$2,755	\$2,930	25%
Wellesley	\$2,357	\$2,597	\$2,589	\$2,795	\$2,952	20%
Holliston	\$1,327	\$1,476	\$1,372	\$1,445	\$1,668	20%

TABLE 2.10. AVERAGE MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENCE RENT (INflation ADJUSTED TO 2016)

Source: Zillow, 2016

Residential Property Taxes

Employers and employees consider not only the cost of purchasing a home when deciding where to live or locate a business, but also property taxes. Massachusetts towns are particularly dependent on real estate taxes to fund local government services such as schools, public safety, and public works; residential property invariably accounts for the largest percentage of the total assessed value in cities and towns. In Natick, the average single family tax bill in 2015 was \$6,630, an increase

20 ACS 2010-2014, B25032, “Units in Structure by Tenure.”

21 Zillow, Natick, Single Family Residence Rent, 2016.

of 16 percent over the average bill in 2011.²² The residential property tax rate in Natick for 2015 is \$13.82 per \$1,000 in assessed value and has increased by 9 percent from 2011. Comparatively, Natick experienced the second largest percent increase, with Framingham experiencing a 10 percent increase between 2011 and 2015.

GEOGRAPHY	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	11 - 15
Framingham	\$5,197	\$5,774	\$5,783	\$5,922	\$5,952	13%
Holliston	\$6,754	\$6,916	\$7,090	\$7,220	\$7,495	10%
Natick	\$5,561	\$6,015	\$6,216	\$6,459	\$6,630	16%
Needham	\$7,719	\$8,075	\$8,416	\$8,765	\$9,240	16%
Wellesley	\$11,281	\$11,860	\$12,198	\$12,469	\$13,326	15%

TABLE 2.11. AVERAGE SINGLE FAMILY HOME TAX BILLS, 2011-2016

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, 2016, and RKG Associates, Inc.

Housing Affordability

Chapter 40B



Multi-family housing development in Natick

G.L. c. 40B, §§ 20-23 (Chapter 40B) is a state law that went into effect in 1969. Its purpose is to provide for a regionally fair distribution of affordable housing for people with low or moderate incomes. Affordable units created under Chapter 40B retain their affordability over time, even under strong market conditions, because an affordable housing deed restriction limits resale prices and rents for many years, if not in perpetuity. Another type of affordable housing - generally older, moderately priced dwellings without deed restrictions, and which lack the features and amenities of new, high-end homes - can help to meet housing needs, too, but only if the market allows. Both types of affordable housing exist in Natick, and both types matter. The key difference is that the market determines the price of unrestricted affordable units while a recorded legal instrument determines the price of deed restricted units. There are also other differences; for example, any household - regardless of income - may purchase or rent an unrestricted affordable unit, but only a low- or moderate-income household is eligible to purchase or rent a deed restricted unit. Regardless of the approach taken, the benefit of creating affordable housing is manifold, as it provides housing options to individuals with limited resources. Long-term planning is required on the part of the community to ensure that such housing exists.

Chapter 40B establishes a statewide goal that at least 10 percent of housing units in every city and town will be deed restricted affordable housing. It authorizes the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to grant a comprehensive permit to qualified developers to build affordable housing. A comprehensive permit is a unified permit, i.e., a single permit that incorporates all local approvals required under zoning and other local bylaws and regulations. Under Chapter 40B, the ZBA can approve, conditionally approve, or deny a comprehensive permit, but in communities that do not meet the 10 percent minimum, developers may appeal to the state Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). The Avalon and Cloverleaf developments were 40B projects. Additionally, the Modera project exists because it is a Chapter 40R project with an affordable component. Chapter 40R allows a town to work in concert with a developer to building multi-family housing in specifically zoned areas.

²²

Massachusetts Department of Revenue, 2016.

The 10 percent statutory minimum is based on the total number of year-round housing units in the most recent federal census. For Natick today, the 10 percent minimum is 1,405 units, or 10 percent (rounded) of the 14,052 year-round units reported in Census 2010. Natick currently exceeds the 10 percent statutory minimum, but just barely, as there are 1,440 units on Natick’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), or 10.25 percent affordable units. If Natick remains over the 10 percent minimum, it will not be at risk from large, unwanted comprehensive permits that require waivers of zoning and other local requirements. *However, the present “surplus” is only thirty-five SHI units, making it important that the continued development and creation of affordable units remains on track.*

SHI DEVELOPMENT TYPES	UNITS
Rental	1,316
Ownership	124
Total SHI Units	1,440
Census 2010 Year Round Housing Units	14,052
Percent Subsidized	10.25%

TABLE 2.12. NATICK SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY, 2016

Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, 2016

Natick is not the only town in the immediate area that currently meets the 10 percent goal. Table 2.13 reports the goal, existing SHI units, and SHI gap or surplus for Natick and neighboring towns. Of the comparison communities, both Holliston and Wellesley are under the statutory requirement of 10 percent affordable units. The importance of remaining over the 10 percent threshold cannot be overstated as it protects the town from 40B developments that result in comprehensive permits that supercede local oversight and input. Natick is close to the 10 percent threshold, and should be cognizant that the housing unit count will change based on the year 2020 decennial census.

GEOGRAPHY	CENSUS 2010 YEAR-ROUND UNITS	10 PERCENT TARGET	EXISTING SHI UNITS	SHI PERCENT	SHI GAP/ SURPLUS
Framingham	27,443	2,744	2,867	10.45%	123
Holliston	5,077	508	233	4.59%	-275
Natick	14,052	1,405	1,440	10.25%	35
Needham	11,047	1,105	1,382	12.51%	277
Wellesley	9,090	909	559	6.15%	-350

TABLE 2.13. CHAPTER 40B STATUS, NATICK & SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, 2016

The Natick Housing Authority manages and maintains a number of affordable properties. These units are spread throughout the Town and provide affordable housing to individuals and families with low incomes or people who are elderly. There are a total of 417 units owned by the Natick Housing Authority.²³

Housing Cost Burden

Rapid growth in housing prices coupled with sluggish growth or an outright decline in incomes, contributes to a housing affordability problem known as housing cost burden. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines housing cost burden as the condition in which low- or moderate-income households spend more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing. When low- or moderate-income households are spending more than half of their income on housing costs, they are said to be severely housing cost burdened.²⁴ Housing cost burden – not Chapter 40B criteria – is the key indicator of affordable housing need in cities and towns.

Over 29 percent of Natick’s households (about 4,005) have low or moderate incomes, and since its housing values and rents run high, it is not surprising to find that many of the Town’s existing residents spend more on housing than they can really afford.²⁵ Table 2.14 reports HUD’s current housing program income limits by family size for the Boston metro area and the maximum housing payment that is affordable in each tier. “Low” and “moderate” incomes are based on percentages of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI), adjusted for household size, in the Boston metro area (which includes Natick).

HOUSEHOLD SIZE (NUMBER OF PEOPLE)	LOW INCOME		MODERATE INCOME	
	INCOME LIMIT	MAXIMUM AFFORDABLE HOUSING PAYMENT	INCOME LIMIT	MAXIMUM AFFORDABLE HOUSING PAYMENT
1	\$34,350	\$859	\$51,150	\$1,279
2	\$39,250	\$981	\$58,450	\$1,461
3	\$44,150	\$1,104	\$65,750	\$1,644
4	\$49,050	\$1,226	\$73,050	\$1,826
5	\$53,000	\$1,325	\$78,900	\$1,973
6	\$56,900	\$1,423	\$84,750	\$2,119

TABLE 2.14. LOW & MODERATE INCOME LIMITS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING COSTS
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2016 Income Limits

Based on the percentage of households in Natick with low to moderate incomes, it is not surprising to find that in Natick, 2,665 low- or moderate-income residents are housing cost burdened (67 percent) and 1,325 are severely cost burdened (33 percent). Though it is a fairly affluent suburb, Natick has a significant percentage of households that have been affected by the rise in homeownership and rental prices. About 71 percent of Natick’s homeowners and 42 percent of its renters have household incomes that exceed 100 percent of the Boston Metro HAMFI. Table 2.15 summarizes the incidence of housing cost burden in Natick and comparison communities. It should be noted that in affluent communities, some homeowners are making the conscious choice to spend more than 30% on housing costs because they can afford it. Reasoning for these choices include having access to excellent public amenities such as schools.

24

For homeowners, “housing cost” includes a mortgage payment, property taxes, and insurance. For renters, “housing cost” includes monthly rent and utilities.

25

CHAS, derived for HUD from ACS Five-Year Estimates, 2009-2013.

GEOGRAPHY	LOW-INCOME HH	% COST BURDENED	MODERATE-INCOME HH	% COST BURDENED	COST BURDENED HOMEOWNERS	COST BURDENED RENTERS
Framingham	8,145	76%	3,020	49%	73%	67%
Holliston	915	60%	345	26%	63%	34%
NATICK	2,845	68%	1,160	62%	68%	65%
Needham	1,370	65%	540	61%	65%	62%
Wellesley	1,000	74%	420	61%	80%	54%

TABLE 2.15. LOW/MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING COST BURDEN

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data, and RKG Associates, Inc.

Development Trends

New Residential Development

Residential development across Natick over the last ten years has accelerated, giving rise to many new housing units. Much of the development in Town is in the form of single family homes with 361 units built between 2006 and 2015.²⁶ The growth in single family homes also has a direct impact on schools, as more children enrolled require greater amounts of resources. Multi-family units have also greatly increased. Based on building permit data, a few large-scale developments have produced a significant number of units; between 2006 and 2015, the 12 structures built that were larger than five units generated 708 units. Some of the large developments are Avalon Natick and Modera.

One of the major concerns with residential development is the impact on Town services like schools. The schools in Natick are experiencing a yearly increase in student population that greatly impacts the ability to physically accommodate students. Concurrent with the new development of housing units, existing homeowners without school age children are downsizing and selling their homes to families with children. While not a physical change to housing stock, the demographic change in the number of occupants impacts school enrollments.

Another concern related to housing is that single family homes are being acquired and demolished, with duplexes developed in their place. This occurrence is happening in areas where property values and density are high; areas such as Natick Center are experiencing this phenomenon. This development trend is occurring because old single family homes on larger lots are attractive to developers. Based on building permit data, between 2006 and 2015, there were 12 duplexes constructed that resulted in 24 units. Although the total number of duplex units developed in this manner is small, it is still important to bear in mind the consequences of the additional density.

Planning Issues and Opportunities

At the November 29, 2016 Community Meeting, several residents discussed their desire for the Town to go further in recognizing the demographic and housing challenges facing the community. Other issues and opportunities were identified through stakeholder meetings and research for this report. For the most part, these suggestions can be organized into the following categories: population and household growth, seniors, housing, and affordability.



Townhomes in Natick Center

Population and Household Growth

Based on the projected population and household growth in Natick, proactive planning is essential for accommodating new growth while maintaining the characteristics and qualities that make Natick a great place to live and work. This future growth has the potential to impact transportation, public infrastructure, housing, and Town services in Natick. The increase in population requires a proactive strategy on the part of the Town to minimize impacts, while not completely closing the doors on new development or redevelopment.

Changes in population and households have positive impacts. The growth in residents between the ages of 35 and 54 years old is helping to fill jobs and homes that are on the market, as well as supporting local retailers. This generates sales and property taxes that are reinvested back into the community. While homeowners and renters in this age group contribute substantially to the vitality of the community, they also rely on Town services such as schools, recreation facilities, and the library. The Town should be aware of the changing demographics and the shifts in age groups to continue to anticipate the needs of its residents.

Other mentioned items from the public meeting and stakeholder interviews are:

- + Population growth impacting school enrollment
- + Elderly care facilities to accommodate older population

Seniors

Residents ages 65 and older currently account for about 15 percent of the total population in Natick. Seniors have special needs and require services that can be different from the rest of the population. The need for amenities such as transportation services, grocery delivery, increased calls to the police and fire departments, and programming to maintain social interaction are all critical pieces to the health and general well-being of senior residents.

In Natick, the escalating housing prices and housing-related costs (taxes, utilities, insurance) can make it difficult for senior residents to remain in their homes. There are also very few options for seniors to move into a different type of housing because of accessibility issues related to housing design and living space arrangements. Seniors maintain a special place within the community and ensuring their presence through targeted initiatives by the Town can help improve the situations faced by seniors.

Other items mentioned at the public meeting and stakeholder interviews are:

- + A serious lack of housing for those over 55 years
- + Housing with first floor master bedrooms

Housing

The price and availability of housing in Natick is driven by the supply and demand of the marketplace. Natick has become a desirable place to live for many reasons. Although population and households have increased substantially over the last forty years, the Town is under market pressure to develop because of the price escalation and supply issues. There is considerable debate, and rightly so, among residents, boards, and officials about how, why, when, and where to accommodate additional housing development. The Master Plan and the Town ultimately have a role in shaping the type, location, and even to some degree the price of new housing. This is an opportunity for the Town to come together to discuss the future of the community and options to direct new housing development, or redevelopment, to particular locations and encourage certain housing types.

Other items mentioned at the public meeting and stakeholder interviews include:

- + Adaptive reuse of existing buildings
- + Available housing for all ages and incomes
- + Increased housing in Downtown
- + More housing choices by type
- + Greater density

Affordability

Long-term affordability within Natick is of great importance because it affects many different types of households. Natick is an affluent community, making it difficult for lower-income households to enter the housing market due to being priced out. Ensuring that lower and middle-income households, and seniors, have adequate housing options is important for preserving the accessibility of Natick. About 10 percent of the housing stock in Natick has been set aside as affordable, just barely over the required 10 percent Chapter 40B threshold. However, just being above the minimum threshold does not satisfy the demand for affordably-priced housing. Even with a town-wide median income of nearly one-hundred thousand per year, home prices both in the rental and for-sale market are still unaffordable for low- and moderate-income households.

Seniors are also burdened with housing affordability issues as many are on fixed incomes and do not have the financial resources to cover ever increasing property taxes and housing-related expenses. Creating housing options for seniors that are either deed-restricted affordable units is one avenue of exploration to help solve the problem of affordability. Other issues raised at the public meeting and stakeholder interviews are:

- + Affordability at all age groups and incomes
- + More affordable units in walkable areas



DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING 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.



Drawing from an understanding of the existing conditions of Natick's population and housing stock, and keeping in mind the identified issues and opportunities, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for the future of housing 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. Provide housing affordable to the full range of income levels.**
- 2. Provide for a mix of housing options at the full spectrum of price points.**
- 3. Support seniors who wish to remain in their homes, as well as those who are looking for other housing types at different sizes and price points.**
- 4. Support the continued existence and increase of naturally occurring housing that is affordable (i.e., existing housing that is or becomes affordable as a result of age, location, size or other characteristics).**
- 5. Support and create housing options for special needs populations which could include, among others, veterans, homeless, families in need, developmentally or physically disabled and elderly.**

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.

Over the course of preparing the Master Plan, there was considerable discussion about providing a range of housing options and encouraging the development of new multi-family housing and/or housing as part of mixed-use districts. During the July 2018 Goals Survey residents strongly supported the proposed goal to provide a mix of housing options at a variety of price points (83% agreed and 17% disagreed) and were fairly evenly split over the proposed goal to encourage higher density housing in appropriate locations throughout Natick (47% agreed and 53% disagreed). A more specific recommendation proposed at the June 20, 2018 Public Meeting and again during the August 2018 Survey - Revise zoning to allow for multi-family and mixed-use development in appropriate zoning districts - received stronger support: 83% of the meeting attendees agreed or somewhat agreed, while 65% of the Survey respondents agreed or somewhat agreed.

GOAL 1

Provide housing affordable to the full range of income levels.



R1.1

INCREASE THE STOCK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

LEAD



PLANNING BOARD
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD

Inclusionary zoning is a regulatory tool which communities can enact that creates a mandatory set aside of affordable units as part of a housing development project. Communities typically establish a percentage which is applied to the total number of housing units in the project. For example, if a fifty-unit development were approved and built and the Town had an inclusionary percentage of 10 percent, then five residential units would need to be reserved for affordable housing.

The Town should consider adopting an inclusionary zoning bylaw with the following considerations at a minimum:

- + The percentage set aside for affordable units (typically 10-20 percent)
- + Threshold for the number of units that would trigger inclusionary zoning (e.g. 10 units or more)
- + Allowing a payment in lieu of affordable units or allowing off-site units to count toward the inclusionary percentage
- + The Area Median Income (AMI) threshold for affordable units to count (e.g. 30%, 60%, 80% of AMI)

The formulation of an inclusionary zoning policy needs to be tailored to Natick's local market and size and type of housing most commonly developed. The policy should also result in housing that meets the State eligibility criteria for placement on the DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), making it "countable" for compliance with MGL 40B. Setting the percentage of affordable units too high could cause development to slow substantially if developers are unable to financially cross-subsidize these units with enough market rate units. The Town should also consider how low to set the unit threshold for triggering the inclusionary zoning requirement. Setting the threshold too low could stymie smaller infill or rehab projects, while setting the threshold too high could miss opportunities to capture affordable units.

In addition to the regulatory component of inclusionary zoning, the Town should also designate a recipient fund for payments in-lieu-of affordable units if Inclusionary Zoning becomes a reality. If developers are able to make payments in lieu of creating actual affordable housing units, the Town should ensure that money is going into a designated fund to be used by another entity in Natick for the creation or preservation of affordable housing. Many communities designate the Affordable Housing Trust as the recipient of these funds.



1-5 YEARS



An Inclusionary Affordable Housing Bylaw was approved at the Fall 2018 Town Meeting. The Bylaw includes the mandatory provision of affordable units for any project that results in a net increase of two or more units; the subdivision of land for two or more dwelling units under an Inclusionary Housing Special Permit, or any residential project that includes two or more assisted living units. The Bylaw mandates that 15 percent of the units in a Residential Project shall be established as affordable dwelling units (20 percent on projects with 30 or more units in the Downtown Mixed Use District) in any one or a combination of methods including: provision of affordable units on site, provision of affordable units off-site, provision of fees-in-lieu of units payment or provision of buildable land. The Natick Affordable Housing Trust is designated as the recipient fund for fees-in-lieu of units payment.

The HOOP District has been successful in adding affordable units in locations in and around Natick Center where Town Meeting has allowed it. In existing HOOP-I and HOOP-II Districts, the Town allows for higher intensity housing development as long as 15 percent is set aside for affordable units as part of the overall unit mix. The HOOP Districts also allow a higher density of development at 17 units per acre in the HOOP-I (up to 29 units per acre with bonuses) and 12 units per acre (up to 14 units per acre with bonuses) in the HOOP-II. **An expansion of the HOOP Districts to other key industrial development parcels in Natick Center would provide incentives to bring in additional housing and at the same time ensure a portion of the new housing is set aside as affordable.** *(Expansion of the HOOP II District north to Bigelow Avenue to allow for continued multi-family residential development consistent with the existing development was approved at Spring 2018 Annual Town Meeting.)*



LEAD

HOUSING AUTHORITY

SUPPORT

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NATICK HOUSING AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WITH A DEVELOPER TO HELP SHARE THE COSTS OF MODERNIZING PUBLIC HOUSING AND INTEGRATING A MIX OF INCOMES TO HELP OFFSET DEVELOPMENT COSTS.

Modernizing existing public housing facilities in today’s financial climate is challenging for large cities and small towns alike. While limited resources do allow for some interior or exterior maintenance and modification, the vast majority of our nation’s public housing stock is substandard and needs to be replaced. **As Natick evaluates improvements to its existing public housing facilities, some consideration should be given to creating a public/partnership with an outside developer to help finance and construct new public housing for Natick’s most vulnerable populations.** To accomplish this, the Town would have to incorporate a mixed-income strategy to any new redevelopment so market-rate housing units could be used to cross-subsidize the deeply affordable units needed to maintain or increase the number of public housing units. This strategy would require allowing a higher intensity of development on the site to accommodate both affordable and market rate units, but would result in substantial improvements to the housing stock and the quality of life for residents.

R1.3

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD

SUPPORT



BOARD OF SELECTMEN
PLANNING BOARD



1-5 YEARS



METRIC

COMPLETION AND ADOPTION AN UPDATED HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN.

1-5 YEARS



METRIC

AT LEAST THREE EDUCATIONAL FOCUS GROUPS HAVE BEEN HELD WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

UPDATE THE TOWN'S HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN.

Natick last completed a Housing Production Plan (HPP) in 2012. Since then, a number of new housing developments have been completed and additional projects are under construction or in the pipeline. At the same time, housing prices have continued to climb and availability of units has declined. Completing an HPP gives the Town a deep assessment of current housing conditions, future projections, and a series of recommendations for addressing housing needs in the community.

According to the State's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), as of September 2017 the Town has 10.4 percent of its year-round housing stock preserved as affordable. This is just over the 10 percent threshold required through Massachusetts Chapter 40B. When the new US Census is conducted in 2020, there is the possibility that Natick will see an increase in year-round housing units thereby reducing the denominator in the 40B affordable housing calculation. If that occurs, the Town could slip below the 10 percent threshold opening itself up to additional unplanned 40B housing developments. **The creation and adoption of an HPP would provide the Town with a tool to plan for the types of affordable housing it would like to see in the locations where the Town feels it is most appropriate and desirable.** If the Town creates affordable housing in a quantity great enough to meet the certification thresholds in a given year it can apply for Safe Harbor status from the MA Department of Housing and Community Development. This again provides opportunities for the Town to pro-actively plan for affordable housing without the unknowns of unplanned 40B developments.

After the completion of the HPP, the Town should **conduct focus groups with Planning Board, Selectmen, and Town Meeting members to help educate them about affordable housing needs, policies, programs, and financing.** These workshops and/or focus groups can help facilitate the often difficult conversations around housing need, housing production, housing type, financing, and where new housing should be located. This can also be an opportunity to discuss how best to implement the recommendations of both the Comprehensive Master Plan and the updated HPP.

R1.4

CREATE A DEDICATED SOURCE OF FUNDING THROUGH TOWN MEETING FOR THE HOUSING TRUST.

LEAD



BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SUPPORT



AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD
FINANCE COMMITTEE



1-5 YEARS



Funding is one of the biggest challenges to creating affordable housing locally, absent a development partner. Fortunately, Natick has an Affordable Housing Trust Fund and a Board that oversees the funds available for affordable housing production and preservation, but the Board is limited in scope by the funding available. Absent payments that could come in the form of fees in lieu of units payments, **the Town could consider setting up an annual disbursement of funds to the Trust through Town Meeting.** This consistent source of funding would allow the Trust plan and program funding for both short-term and long-term projects and programs. The Trust could then become much more proactive in seeking out projects, rather than being reactive with the uncertainty of funding from year to year. The 2018 budget included this line item, and a line item has been proposed for the 2019 budget. An annual disbursement would provide more predictability, allowing the Trust to better plan for the future.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A RECURRING LINE ITEM IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND.

4-7 YEARS



R1.5

ASSIST LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS IN FINANCING HOME REPAIRS.

LEAD



AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD

SUPPORT



BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE



In an effort to help residents remain in their homes and make home repairs accessible to those who can least afford it, the Town could consider creating a no- or low-interest rate loan program specifically for home repairs. The Town belongs to the WestMetro HOME Consortium and could access funds through their annual allocation to establish a program. This fund could function as a dedicated revolving loan fund and the Town could gift an amount to match what is available through the HOME Consortium to increase the pool for loans. Other communities around the Commonwealth have similar programs, although many do have dedicated revenues through CDBG and HOME funding that is not shared with other municipalities through a consortium. The Town of Weymouth is one such community that has established a zero interest rate home improvement financing and technical rehabilitation assistance program.

The recommendation is ambitious because the Town would need to establish, fund and administer a loan program; this would likely require hiring a housing coordinator or paying the WestMetro HOME consortium to administer the program. The program would be particularly beneficial to seniors on fixed-incomes who cannot afford necessary home repairs, and could potentially help to keep existing housing stock in a state of good repair to discourage future tear-downs.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOAN FUND AND FIVE HOMEOWNERS ASSISTED WITH REHABILITATION PROJECTS.

GOAL 2

Provide for a mix of housing options at the full spectrum of price points.



R2.1

LEAD



PLANNING BOARD
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

SUPPORT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF PROPERTIES IN NATICK CENTER BY ALLOWING AND ENCOURAGING MIXED-USE AND MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING THAT PROVIDES HOUSING OPTIONS AND BRINGS MORE PEOPLE TO DOWNTOWN TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES.

Natick Center provides many of the amenities of urban living in a suburban setting. Access to an MBTA commuter rail station, restaurants and shops, civic buildings, and public spaces are just some of the amenities attracting new investment to Natick Center. Demand for new housing in mixed-use buildings in Natick Center is strong, and projects like Natick Common Residences and the conversion of the former American Legion building are proof that people want to live, work, shop, and enjoy Natick Center.



New outdoor seating at Buttercup Restaurant at 13 West Central Street.

As the Town strives to create a more vibrant and active downtown, the addition of housing can bring a built-in market for businesses and reduce traffic impacts as residents can more easily walk to nearby amenities or even take the commuter rail to work. Housing in Natick Center is also more likely to include smaller units in new or refurbished buildings, providing a different housing choice for those who cannot afford or do not want a single-family home. **The Town should consider updating the existing base zoning district(s) covering Natick Center to allow more by-right integration of housing through a streamlined permitting process.**



ON-GOING



R2.2

LEAD



PLANNING BOARD
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS.

While Natick's overall population is anticipated to grow by about one percent between 2020 and 2030, a diverse housing stock is still needed to support both existing and future residents. The average number of persons in a household continues to shrink, and housing preferences for younger and older residents are changing. These two changes are creating a situation across most communities where the housing stock does not match the market demand. Young professionals are delaying family formation and instead opt for smaller units in amenity-rich environments like Downtown Natick. Older residents are looking to move out of single-family homes to reduce costs, decrease maintenance responsibilities, and find housing with universal design elements.



4-7 YEARS

If Natick wants to retain its older citizens and attract new residents to keep the community vibrant and active, housing will have to play a critical role. **One step the Town should take is critically reviewing zoning in the parts of town where multi-family and mixed-use development are likely to be supported politically and financially. Siting higher intensity development in specific locations where impacts to existing single-family neighborhoods will be minimal could help increase housing choice and price diversity.**

Suitable areas of Natick where zoning should be reviewed for the inclusion of multi-family housing and mixed-use development include existing commercial corridors or clusters of economic activity.

GOAL 3

Support seniors who wish to remain in their homes, as well as those who are looking for other housing types at different sizes and price points.

R3.1

CHANGE ZONING TO ENABLE THE PRODUCTION OF A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES TO HELP SENIORS TO STAY IN NATICK.

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD

SUPPORT 

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Sometimes referred to as “granny flats,” accessory dwelling units (ADU’s) are secondary homes built on existing residential properties, either separate from or connected to a principal structure. While generally smaller in size, ADU’s can vary greatly in scale and amenities.

ADU’s can provide cost-effective housing in places where open land on existing lots may not be fully utilized. This helps minimize their impacts on infrastructure, and typically provides options for (increasingly common) one- and two-person households. By eliminating the largest cost driver of most new homes, (because the land is already owned by the principal homeowner), ADU’s can provide new housing options at a fraction of the cost of most “affordable units.”

By fitting an ADU on an existing lot or as a careful extension of another home, communities can add much-needed housing with a greatly limited impact on a neighborhood’s scale or feel. Building an ADU also can be a financial incentive for principal homeowners; the supplemental rental income from an ADU may help senior residents stay in their home.

Most barriers to the construction of these units are regulatory. Proponents contend that owner-occupancy rules are the most damaging to ADU construction. Municipalities in California, Oregon, and British Columbia have allowed ADU’s after settling on requirements for lot sizes, setbacks, parking, and scale. Boston is in the midst of its own pilot program in select neighborhoods in 2018, and New Hampshire has released a guide for municipalities looking to make ADU’s a reality. Some municipalities are working to provide revolving loans and other incentives to make ADU’s financially feasible for homeowners considering them.



Fast Co.Design

Example of a detached ADU.



I-5 YEARS



The Town should explore options for allowing ADUs, taking into consideration how and where ADU's might serve as an effective housing option, how zoning and performance standards would ensure that new units fit with Natick's existing development pattern and neighborhoods, and how to regulate the units so that all single family houses are not priced as potential two-family houses. Natick currently allows only "family suites" which are limited to a relative of the primary owner.

While assisted living facilities are not the cure-all for senior housing needs, they can provide yet another option for seniors who are looking for additional care or assistance as they age in the community. Natick has struggled to find the right balance in their approach to zoning for assisted living over the last year or two, and has yet to settle on a set of performance measures or a geographic location that can garner wide support at Town Meeting. As the community continues to struggle with this issue, senior housing needs grow. Finding ways to allow assisted living in the right location and with minimal impacts to surrounding properties will be key to introducing this new housing option in Natick.

The Town should create zoning that allows assisted living in geographically appropriate areas and minimizes impacts on surrounding properties.



I-5 YEARS



Cluster zoning is a regulatory tool municipalities can use to accommodate residential development on a parcel of land while preserving open space and natural vegetation and views along roadways. The primary principle behind cluster development is to create smaller lots and smaller homes and gather them together in one area of the parcel while preserving the remainder of the parcel as open space. Under conventional subdivision rules, the entirety of the parcel could be developed using standard lot sizes, required infrastructure, and the minimum set aside for open space.

Natick has regulations for cluster development, but they are limited to parcels greater than twenty-two acres in size. Since the Town is largely built out at this point in time, there are very few parcels available that meet that minimum size threshold.

Therefore, **the Town should consider reworking the Cluster Bylaws to better suit the development pattern and opportunity sites left in Natick. Some key considerations the Town should discuss as it pursues an update to the Cluster Bylaws include:**

- + What is the ideal minimum lot size requirement?
- + What type(s) of housing should the Bylaw allow or encourage? Should it be limited to single-family homes, or should it include townhouses, duplexes, four-plexes, cottages, etc.
- + Should the Town allow a higher number of units as an incentive to encourage cluster development over conventional subdivisions?
- + What percentage open space set aside should be required?
- + Does the Town want to write the Bylaw in such a way as to preserve views or natural corridors along certain roadways?



I-5 YEARS





Example of a cluster housing development.



R3.2

FORM A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNCIL ON AGING AND LOCAL REALTORS AND BANKS TO BRING IN HOUSING OMBUDS WHO COULD SERVE NATICK SENIORS AS RESOURCES ON HOUSING OPTIONS AND FINANCIAL INQUIRIES.

LEAD 
 COUNCIL ON AGING

SUPPORT 
 AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD
 LOCAL BANKS AND REALTORS

1-5 YEARS



Throughout the planning process, the issue of senior housing options and affordability came up repeatedly. This is an issue challenging Natick and hundreds of other communities across the Commonwealth. One key challenge with seniors is getting the word out about housing programs and options, particularly to those residents who are not connected to digital media and communication platforms. Even those residents who are connected can find the variety of programs, the application process, and the limitations confusing and difficult to evaluate. **One option is to create an in-town resource through the Council on Aging that uses local lending and real estate experts as ombuds to seniors who are looking for housing options.** These local experts could help walk seniors through available housing options, financing programs, tax abatement programs, advice on buying or selling a home, and other complex topics.

GOAL 4

Support the continued existence of naturally occurring housing that is affordable (i.e., existing housing that is or becomes affordable as a result of age, location, size or other characteristics).



R4.1

IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS AND REGULATORY CHANGES THAT WILL HELP NATICK RETAIN MORE OF ITS EXISTING STOCK OF NATURALLY OCCURRING AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

LEAD 
 HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

SUPPORT 
 PLANNING BOARD
 BOARD OF SELECTMEN
 AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD

1-5 YEARS



As Natick’s housing stock continues to increase in price, there are fewer and fewer affordable housing options that are not deed restricted and only available to those at a qualifying income level. The stock of naturally occurring housing that is relatively affordable (as a result of its age, as well as building and parcel size) is often bought up by investors or developers, demolished, and rebuilt as a much larger and more expensive single-family or two-family home. Natick has become a very desirable community in which to live, and as a result housing prices and demand now support tear down/rebuild activity.

Natick has an existing demolition delay policy which calls for a six-month cooling period for structures that qualify as historic. During this period, the Town issues a stay on the demolition of the property in hopes the owner will choose to rehabilitate the existing structure instead of tearing it down and rebuilding some larger and more valuable structure. Demolition delay can help maintain the stock of historic structures in Town, and can also be used as a tool to help preserve parts of the housing stock that might be more affordable than new housing units. **To further enhance the demolition delay policy, it is recommended that the delay period be extended from six month to one year.**





4-7 YEARS



In conjunction with the increase in the demolition delay period, **the Town could also consider instituting a demolition fee for which the proceeds could be deposited into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to be used for the creation and/or preservation of affordable housing.** This could also be a mechanism for adding funds to the affordable housing rehabilitation loan fund noted in recommendation 1.6.

The Town may encounter "push-back" on instituting a new fee, but the benefits would include discouraging unnecessary tear-downs and providing additional funds for affordable housing and historic preservation.



DEMOLITION DELAY INCREASED TO ONE YEAR AND A DEMOLITION FEE INSTITUTED.

LEAD



BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SUPPORT



FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Town might also consider taking a more proactive and creative approach. There are some neighborhoods that have smaller more affordable homes that could be considered for a pilot tax abatement program where **the Town could offer a break on property taxes in return for the preservation of the home over a certain period of time. The Town could also create a resale formula that would limit the sale price to a certain percentage of the true market value in return for a continuation of the property tax abatement.**

4-7 YEARS



This approach would require extensive discussion and study to fully understand the tax impacts to both the Town and individual property owners, but would help to preserve existing affordable homes.

GOAL 5

Support and create housing for special needs populations, which could include, among others, veterans, homeless, families in need, developmentally or physically disabled and elderly.

R5.1

LEAD



AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST BOARD

SUPPORT



COUNCIL ON AGING
HOUSING AUTHORITY
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

ASSESS THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS OF NATICK’S RESIDENTS, AND TAKE STEPS TO ADDRESS THOSE NEEDS THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING, SERVICE-ENRICHED HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS RESIDENTS, CONGREGATE HOUSING, OR OTHER RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS.

Often overlooked as a housing need in a community, service-enriched housing or other housing for residents with special needs is a critical component to making a community livable for all residents. **The Town should develop an assessment of the needs of these residents and determine how best to provide them with housing options. This assessment could be a component of the next update to the Town’s Housing Production Plan.**



1-5 YEARS



CREATION OF AN INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS.

1-5 YEARS



Residents who have special housing needs can be very difficult to get in touch with and may face language barriers, mental disabilities, or fear of engaging with Town staff. **Providers should work with Town staff, non-profits, and other local action councils to develop outreach materials and methods of disseminating information to reach the widest audience possible.** This should include digital and print media, as well as attending events, programs, or gatherings to speak with those individuals one-on-one or in groups.

R5.2

LEAD



HOUSING AUTHORITY

SUPPORT



BOARD OF SELECTMEN




ON-GOING










DIRECT LOCAL FUNDS TO SUPPORT REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS.







Natick is already engaged with the WestMetro HOME Consortium to gain access to federal housing funds for which the Town would otherwise not qualify. The most recent Town goals for the HOME Consortium funds include rehabilitation of public housing units.

The Town should continue to pursue HOME funding for this purpose, and look for opportunities to supplement those funds with other local dollars, as well as state and other federal sources (tax credits, etc.).

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 1: Provide housing affordable to the full range of income levels.	R1.1: Increase the stock of affordable housing.	Inclusionary zoning bylaw approved at Fall 2018 Town Meeting. 	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Affordable Housing Trust Board	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Expand HOOP Districts to other key development parcels in Natick Center, to provide incentives to bring in additional housing. Ensure that a portion of the new housing is set aside as affordable. 	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department		1-5 YEARS		Land Use
	R1.2: Explore opportunities for the Housing Authority to enter into a public/private partnership with a developer to help share the costs of modernizing public housing and integrating a mix of incomes to help offset development costs.	Create a public partnership with an outside developer to help finance and construct new public housing for Natick's most vulnerable populations. 	Housing Authority	Board of Selectmen Community & Economic Development Department	7-12+ YEARS		Land Use Economic Development
	R1.3: Update the Town's Housing Production Plan.	Create and adopt an HPP to provide the Town with a tool to plan for the types of affordable housing it would like to see in the locations where the Town feels it is most appropriate and desirable. 	Affordable Housing Trust Board Community & Economic Development Department	Board of Selectmen Planning Board	1-5 YEARS	Completion and adoption an updated Housing Production Plan.	
		Conduct focus groups with Planning Board, Selectmen, and Town Meeting members to help educate them about affordable housing needs, policies, programs, and financing.	Affordable Housing Trust Board Community & Economic Development Department	Board of Selectmen Planning Board	1-5 YEARS	At least three educational focus groups have been held within the next five years.	

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R1.4: Create a dedicated source of funding through Town Meeting for the Housing Trust.	Set up an annual disbursement of funds to the Affordable Housing Trust through Town Meeting.	Board of Selectmen	Affordable Housing Trust Board Finance Committee	1-5 YEARS	Establishment of a recurring line item in the annual budget for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.	
	R1.5: Assist low income households in financing home repairs.	Create a no- or low-interest rate loan program specifically for home repairs.	Affordable Housing Trust Board	Board of Selectmen Finance Committee	4-7 YEARS	Establishment of a loan fund and five homeowners assisted with rehabilitation projects.	
Goal 2: Provide for a mix of housing options at the full spectrum of price points.	R2.1: Support the redevelopment of properties in Natick Center by allowing and encouraging mixed-use and multi-family housing that provides housing options and brings more people to downtown to support local businesses.	Consider updating the existing base zoning district(s) covering Natick Center to allow more by-right integration of housing through a streamlined permitting process.	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		
	R2.2: Increase opportunities for multi-family and mixed-use development in appropriate locations.	Critically review the zoning in the parts of town where multi-family and mixed-use development are likely to be supported politically and financially. Site higher intensity development in specific locations where impacts to existing single-family neighborhoods will be minimal.	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Zoning Board of Appeals Affordable Housing Trust Board Economic Development Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 3: Support seniors who wish to remain in their homes, as well as those who are looking for other housing types at different sizes and price points.	R3.1: Change zoning to enable the production of a variety of housing types to help seniors to stay in Natick.	Consider how and where accessory dwelling units could serve as an effective housing option, and design zoning and performance standards to that fit with Natick's existing development pattern and neighborhoods. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Zoning Board of Appeals	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Create zoning that allows assisted living in geographically appropriate areas and minimizes impacts on surrounding properties. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Council on Aging	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Consider reworking the Cluster By-laws to better suit the development pattern and opportunity sites left in Natick. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
	R3.2: Form a partnership between the Council on Aging and local Realtors and banks to bring in housing ombudspersons who could serve Natick seniors as resources on housing options and financial inquiries.	Create an in-town resource through the Council on Aging that uses local lending and real estate experts as ombudspersons to seniors who are looking for housing options.	Council on Aging	Affordable Housing Trust Board Local Banks & Realtors	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
Goal 4: Support the existence of naturally occurring housing that is affordable.	R4.1: Implement programs and regulatory changes that will help Natick retain more of its existing stock of naturally occurring affordable housing. 	Extend the demolition delay period from six months to one year. 	Historic District Commission	Planning Board Board of Selectmen Affordable Housing Trust Board	1-5 YEARS	Demolition delay period increased from six months to one year.	Land Use Historic & Cultural Resources
		Consider instituting a demolition fee from which the proceeds could be deposited into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to be used for the creation and/or preservation of affordable housing. 	Historic District Commission	Planning Board Board of Selectmen Affordable Housing Trust Board	4-7 YEARS	Institution of demolition fee.	Land Use Historic & Cultural Resources

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility 	Support Responsibility 	Time Frame 	Metric	Coordination 
		Offer a break on property taxes in return for the preservation of the home over a certain period of time. Create a resale formula that would limit the sale price to a certain percentage of the true market value in return for a continuation of the property tax abatement.	Board of Selectmen	Finance Committee	4-7 YEARS		
Goal 5: Support and create housing for special needs populations, which could include, among others, veterans, homeless, families in need, developmentally or physically disabled and elderly.	R5.1: Assess the supportive housing and programmatic needs of Natick's residents, and take steps to address those needs through affordable housing, service-enriched housing for special needs residents, congregate housing, or other residential options.	Develop an assessment of residents' special needs and determine how best to provide them with housing options. This assessment could be a component of the next update to the Town's Housing Production Plan.	Affordable Housing Trust Board	Council on Aging Housing Authority Community & Economic Development Department	1-5 YEARS	Creation of an inventory and assessment of special housing needs.	
		Special needs housing providers should work with Town staff, non-profits, and other local action councils to develop outreach materials and methods of disseminating information to reach the widest audience possible. 	Affordable Housing Trust Board	Council on Aging Housing Authority Community & Economic Development Department	1-5 YEARS		
	R5.2: Direct local funds to support rehabilitation and preservation of public housing units.	Continue to pursue HOME funding and look for opportunities to supplement those funds with other local dollars, as well as state and other rehabilitation federal sources. 	Housing Authority	Board of Selectmen	ON-GOING		



3. Land Use and Zoning

KEY FINDINGS

- + The total amount of land classified as Urban Development (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, transportation) was between 50% and 60% of the total land area from 1971 to 1999. From 1999 until 2016 it increased by 1064 acres to 70%.
- + 18% of the existing buildings were built prior to 1940. 15% were built between 2000 and 2016.
- + 47% of Natick's total land area is in residential use. In 1999, multi-family residential represented 4.3% of all residential land use (by acreage). Today it represents 17%.
- + The 1970 population occupied approximately 0.13 acres per person (based on total acreage in residential use). That number increased to 0.15 acres per person in 2000 and today is less than 0.14 acres per person.

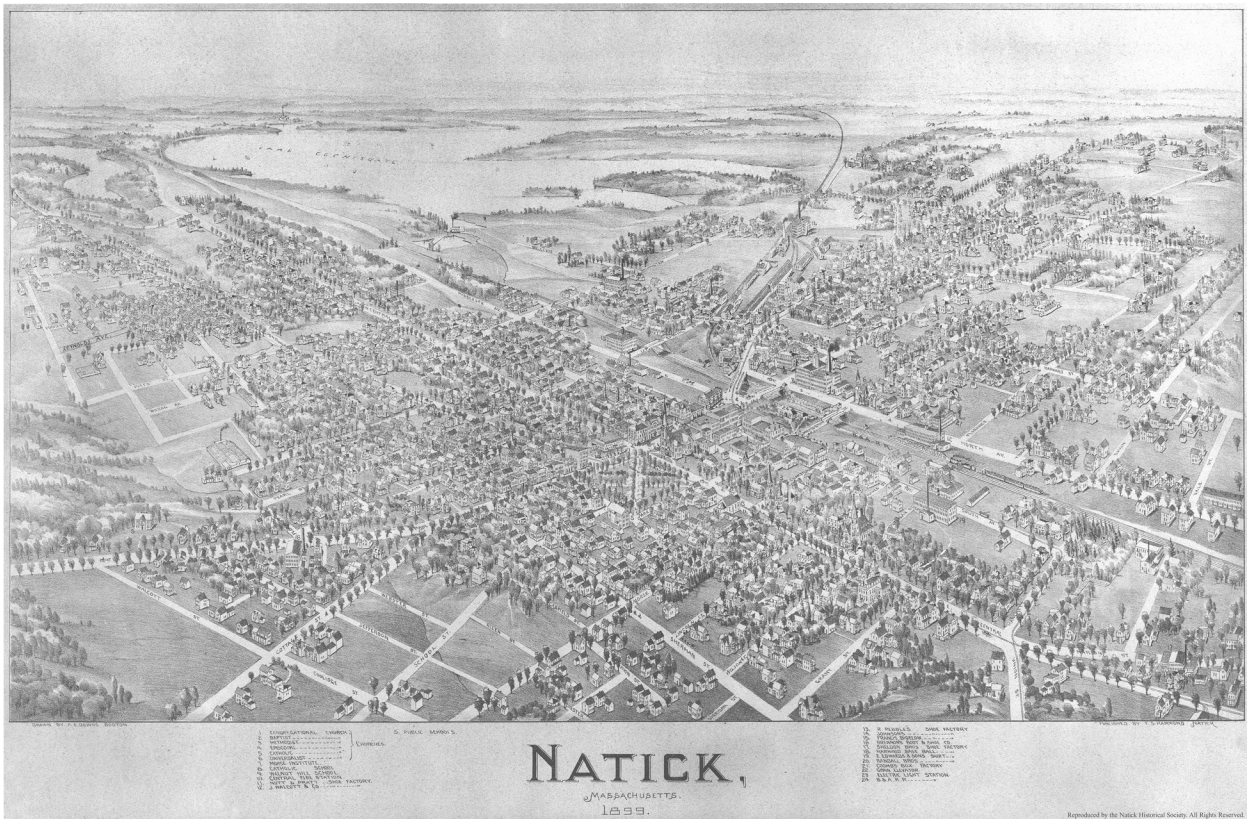
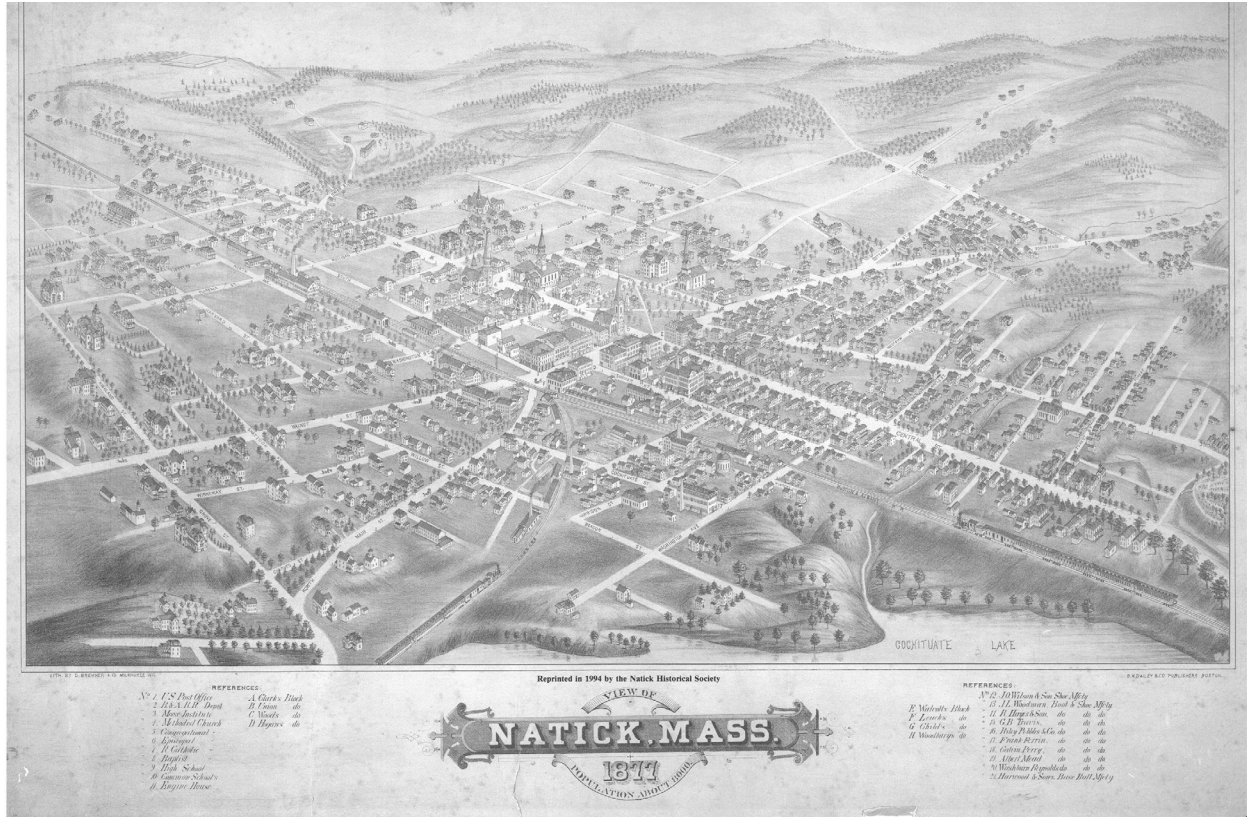
Introduction & Existing Conditions

A town's land use patterns provide a link to the town's history and the way in which it was developed over time. At the same time, the patterns very much impact the character and "feel" of a town and how people live their lives within the town:

- + Are houses close together so that residents can talk to their neighbors from front porches?
- + Are neighborhoods laid out on street grids that make connections easy between adjacent streets as well as between adjacent districts or on cul-de-sacs that create more of a sense of privacy and enclosure?
- + Are there residential areas clustered around commercial centers with good sidewalks to promote a walkable environment?
- + Are employment centers located near convenient roadway and transit access?
- + Are there neighborhoods with single family homes on large lots where residents can feel removed from the congestion and bustle of more densely developed areas?

Natick has all of these attributes and more in varying locations and degrees. And, to some extent, these characteristics are a function of when a particular area developed. Maps 3.1 and 3.2 graphically display these development patterns and the periods in which they were built. For example, in the residential districts around the Town Center, mostly built prior to 1950, homes have small lots on well-connected streets. Tract housing with very regular lot and house sizes on a curving street grid, such as in the Wethersfield neighborhood, was a popular development pattern in the 1950s, while multi-family cluster housing such as at Natick Village became more popular in the 1970s and 1980s. The cul-de-sac streets in South Natick were built mostly in the 1980s and 1990s. And finally, the larger multi-family buildings such as Avalon and Cloverleaf were built in the 2010s. These development patterns also reflect times when Natick experienced great changes (e.g., population, roadways, industry).

Natick still has a significant number of older historic buildings, with over 18 percent of the buildings having been constructed prior to 1940. Almost 15 percent were constructed since 2000; the remaining 67% were built between 1941 and 1999.



Historic maps from 1877 (facing south to the hills) and 1899 (facing north to Lake Cochituate) show a well developed Town Center with houses, commercial buildings, churches, factories and the Town Common.

History of Development Patterns

TIME PERIOD	POPULATION CHANGE: ACTUAL NUMBER / % CHANGE	DEVELOPMENT TRENDS
1940-1950	+5,987 persons / 43%	Tract-style single family homes
1950-1970	+11,219 persons / 57%	Tract-style single family homes, some on larger lots. Large scale retail mall and shopping center.
1970-1990	-547 / (-2%)	Cluster development and development around natural features. Large single-tenant commercial developments.
1990-2010	+2,496 / 8%	Cluster development and development around natural features. Single family homes. Retail expansion.
2010-2014	+1,224 / 4%	Large, multi-family developments

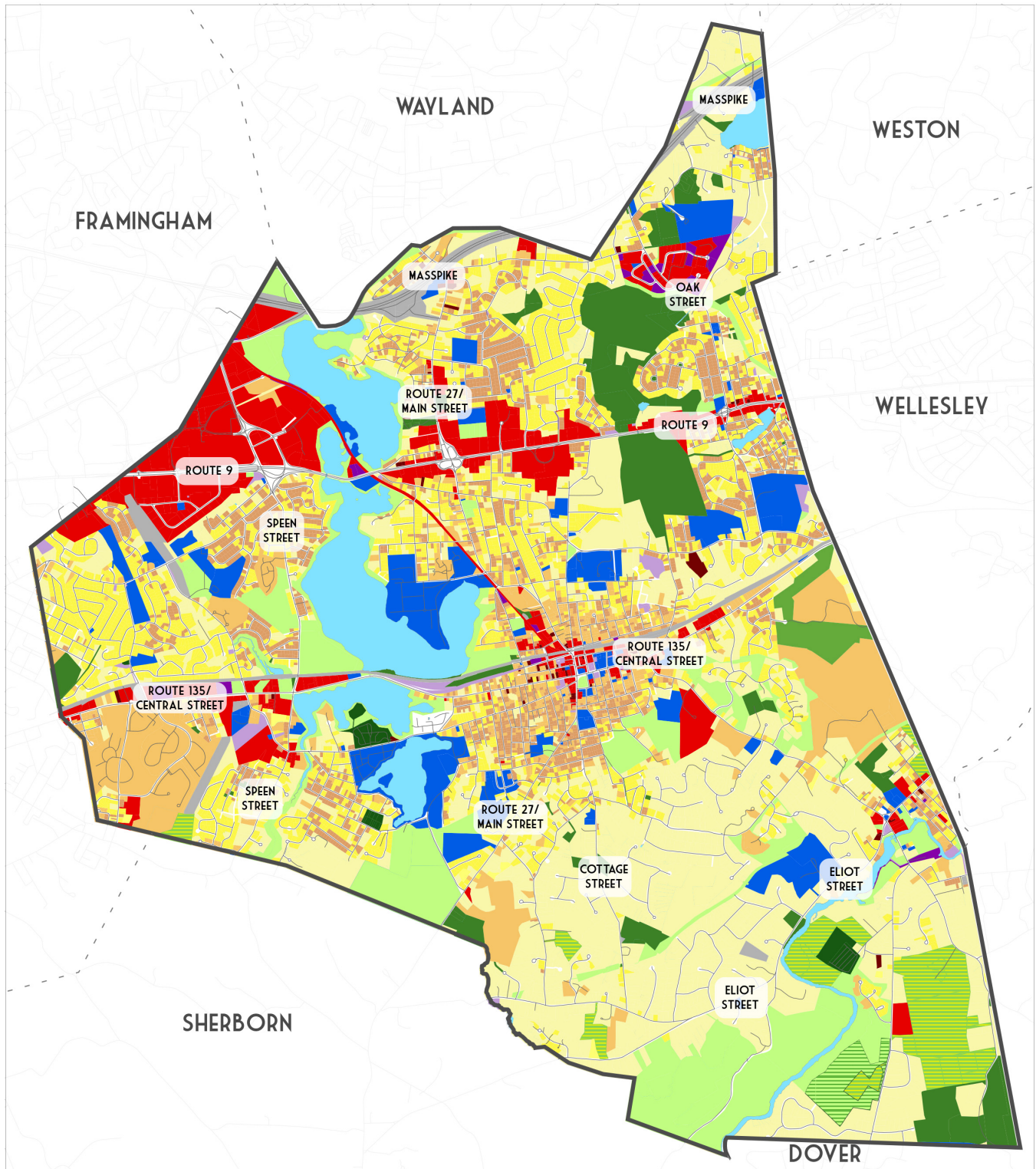
TABLE 3.1: DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Source: U.S. Census and Natick Assessors Office Data

Like most towns in New England, Natick's early development patterns were guided by natural resources and transportation corridors. Natick, meaning "Place of Hills," was founded in South Natick on the Charles River in 1651 as one of several settlements for Native Americans who had been converted to Christianity. This settlement became the earliest commercial development, although the Town was predominately agricultural.


















With the introduction of the Boston & Albany Railroad connecting Boston and Worcester in 1835, and the rise of industrialization, development moved north to what is today known as Natick Center. Natick's growing shoe industry became the third largest shoe production community in the country, with 23 shoe manufacturers by 1880. Worker housing was built nearby. In 1874, a great fire demolished 18 blocks in the Town Center, including two shoe factories, the Town Hall, the Fire Engine House, the Congregational Church and many homes. Natick rebuilt after the fire and many of today's buildings were constructed between 1874 and 1900. Historic maps from 1877 and 1899 show a well-established Town Center with a common, churches, and commercial, manufacturing and residential buildings; with hills and open land to the south. That dense land use pattern on small parcels continues today.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, the shoe industry was declining and the automobile was introduced. Route 9 was built as the first divided highway in the state. Commercial development moved north to Route 9. Natick slowly changed from a major manufacturing town to a commuter suburb of Boston. By 1950, two-thirds of Natick's full-time workers were employed outside of Natick.

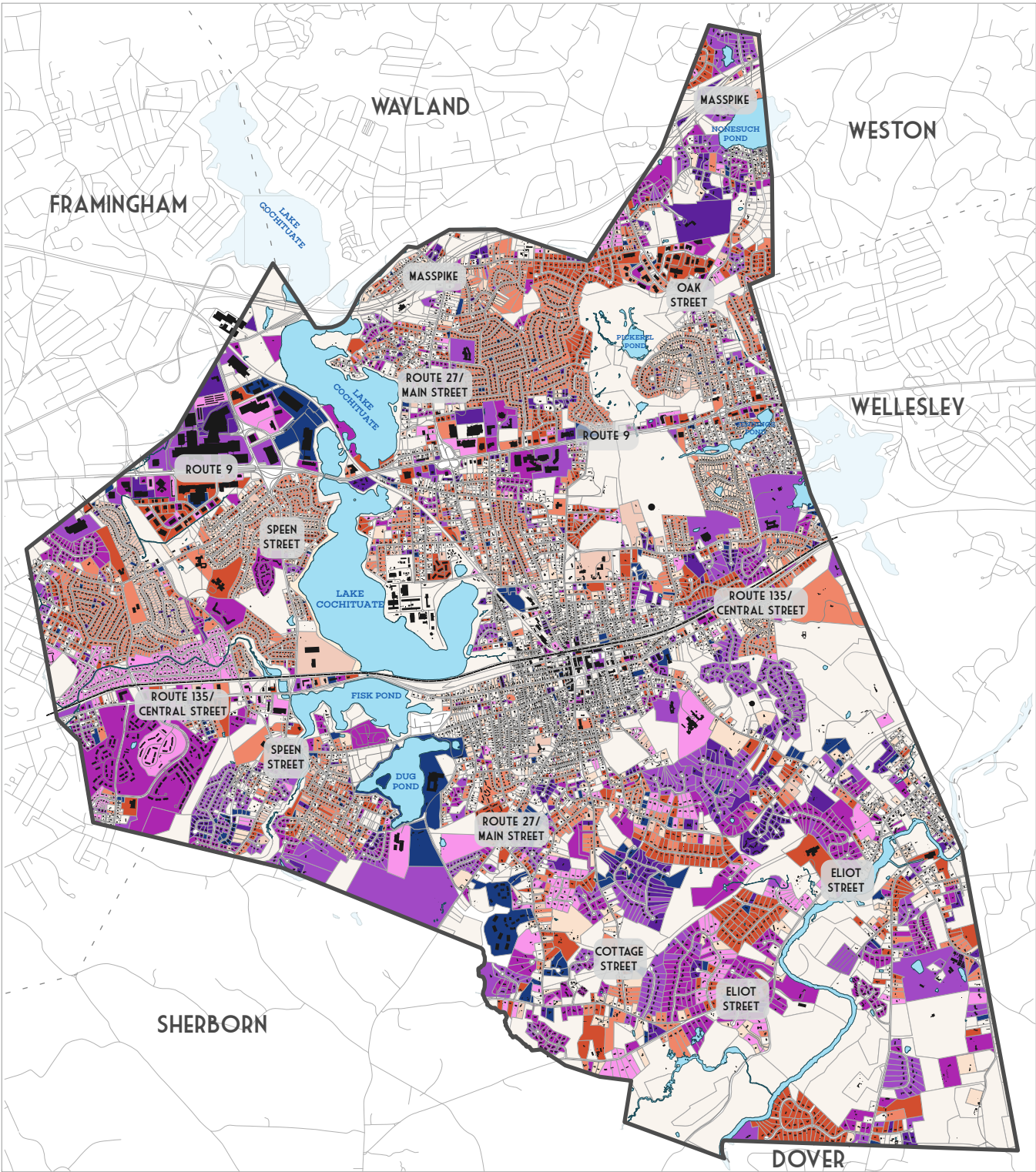


MAP 3.1: EXISTING LAND USE

**L
E
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D**

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Low Density Residential |  Agriculture |
|  Medium Density Residential |  Forest |
|  Multi-Family Residential |  Conservation |
|  High Density Residential |  Cemetery |
|  Commercial |  Wetland |
|  Industrial |  Vacant |
|  Mixed Use |  Water |
|  Recreational | |
|  Urban Public/Institutional | |
|  Transportation/Powerline/Utility | |



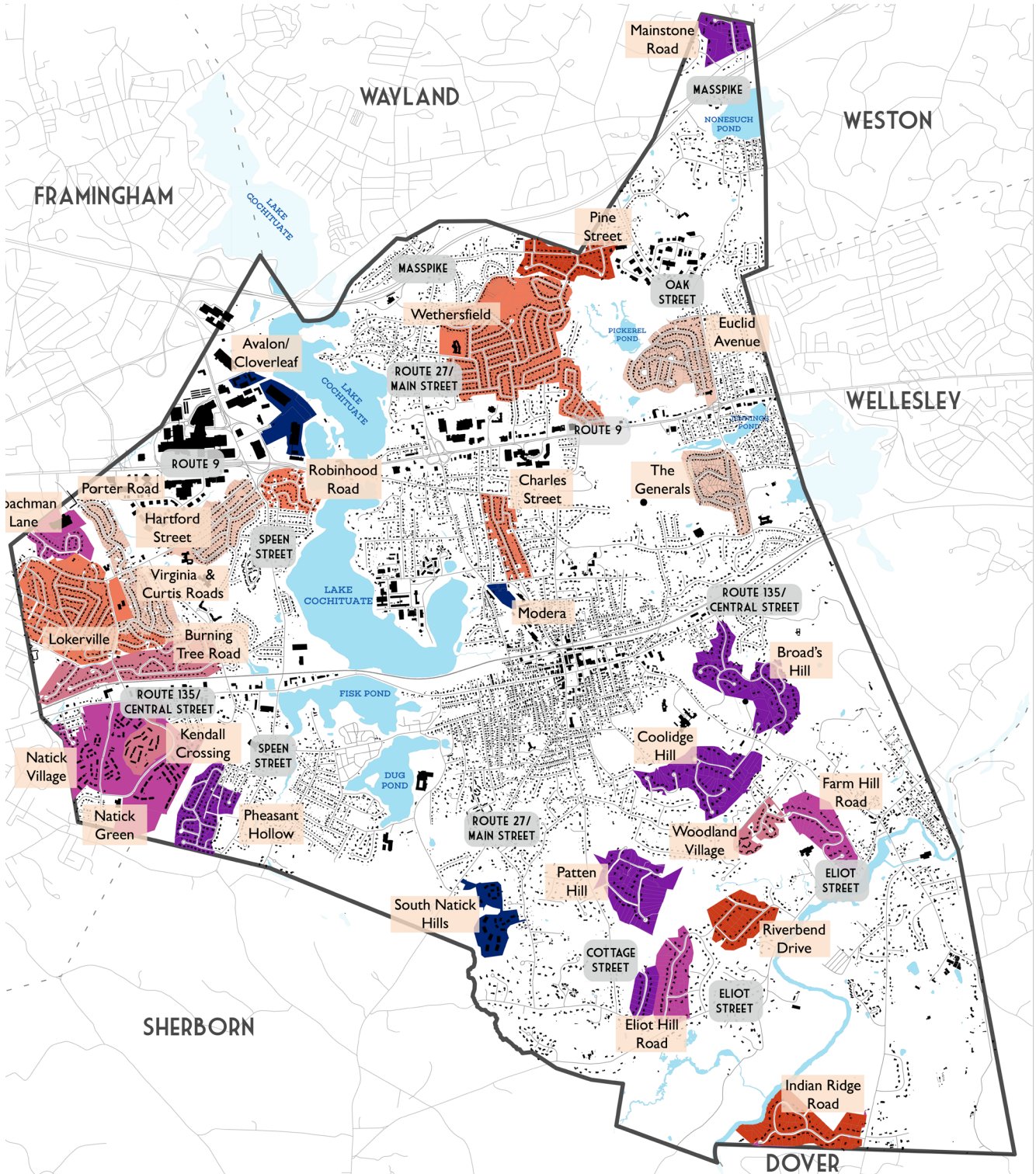


BUILDING CONSTRUCTION YEAR

■ Prior to 1940	■ 1980-1989
■ 1940-1949	■ 1990-1999
■ 1950-1959	■ 2000-2009
■ 1960-1969	■ 2010-Present
■ 1970-1979	

MAP 3.2: DEVELOPMENT HISTORY





- LEGEND**
- | | |
|-------|------------|
| 1940s | 1990s-2010 |
| 1950s | 2010s |
| 1960s | |
| 1970s | |
| 1980s | |

MAP 3.3: NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HISTORY





Historic map from 1750 highlights Natick's natural features, including hills, plains and water bodies.

Residential Development

While early residential development was clustered in South Natick and later around factories near Natick Center, Natick saw significant residential development after World War II. Housing for the returning soldiers and their families was built in East, North and West Natick, as shown on Map 3.3. In the 1940s, large developments of tract housing south of Route 9 included The Generals east of Hunnewell Town Forest in East Natick, as well as developments on the west side of Speen Street north and south of Hartford Street and around Virginia and Curtis Roads. North of Route 9, the area around Euclid Avenue between Oak Street and Pickerell Pond was developed.

New developments in the 1950s - including Wethersfield north of Route 9, Lokerville south of Route 9 and west of Route 27, Charles Street north of the Town Center and the Robinhood Road area west of Lake Cochituate - were similar in style to the 1940s developments, but with slightly larger parcels and houses. This trend of similar land use patterns with increasingly larger parcels continued in both north and south Natick through the 1960s and 1970s and, to some extent, into today.

1960s residential development included single family homes in South Natick along Riverbend Drive north of Eliot Street and Indian Ridge Way south of the Charles River on the Dover town line.

The area within walking distance of the West Natick train station experienced another building boom in the early 1970s and 1980s, when a large residential subdivision was built on the site of a former golf course on the north side of Route 135 along Burning Tree Road, and large condominium and apartment complexes such as Natick Green, Kendall Crossing and Natick Village (Natick's first experiment with cluster zoning) were built on the south side of Route 135.

The 1980s also saw an increase in residential development around natural features, particularly hills, including Coachman Lane at Drury Hill and in South Natick along Eliot Hill Road and Farm Hill Road.

TIME PERIOD	HOUSING UNITS CONSTRUCTED
Pre-1900	2,124
1901-1940	1,834
1941-1970	5,251
1971-1991	1,300
1992-2015	1,927

TABLE 3.2: HOUSING CONSTRUCTION
Source: Natick Assessors Office Data

Most of the residential development between 1990 and 2010 was single family housing, primarily south of Central Street. Many of these developments continued the pattern of building on sites with natural features such as hills and ponds, including the development around Broad's Hill east of Union Street; just south of Coolidge Hill and Coolidge Woods along Moccasin and Arrow Paths; around Patten Hill along Deer Path and Whispering Lane; the very northern tip of Natick around the Pond on Mainstone and Saddlebrook Roads; and Woodland Village just south of Woodland Street and north of the Sudbury Aqueduct. The Pheasant Hollow neighborhood was developed with a number of single family homes, south of Pond Street and west of Speen Street. Although the Pheasant Hollow homes are larger than those in the older southwest Natick neighborhood to the east, the lots are of a similar size. Eliot Hill Road in South Natick continued to develop with single family homes.

Between 2010 and 2017, residential development included a few large multi-family developments such as Avalon Natick and Cloverleaf across Speen Street from the Natick Mall, Modera (on the former Natick Paperboard site), just north of Natick Center, and South Natick Hills.



The Development History map (Map 3.3) also illustrates teardown and infill activity in older neighborhoods, particularly between 2000 and 2016. Neighborhoods which have seen the most teardown/infill activity include East Natick around Euclid Avenue; Wethersfield; Morse Pond Grove; the Curtis Road area and Lokerville west of Mill Street; and south of Sherman Street on the south side of Natick Center.

Smart Growth and Affordable Housing Regulations

Over the years, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Town of Natick have adopted regulations to spur the development of affordable housing and smart growth projects that conserve natural resources and focus development near transit and commercial centers.

Cluster Zoning adopted by the Town was designed “To permit more economical and efficient use of residential land than may be accomplished through standard subdivision redevelopment by: protecting the existing character of the landscape, introducing some variety into residential development, and preserving for the Town more open space for water supply; flood protection; woodland, field and wetland habitat; conservation; and recreation.”

Chapter 40B was enacted by the State of Massachusetts in 1969 and enables local Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBAs) to approve affordable housing developments under flexible rules if at least 20-25% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions. The standard is for communities to provide a minimum of 10% of their total housing inventory as affordable. If municipalities are below the 10% threshold, the state’s Housing Appeals Committee can overturn any local rejection of a 40B permit. The South Natick Hills development on South Main Street at the Sherborn town line, as well as the Cloverleaf and Avalon Natick apartment complexes across from the Natick Mall, were developed under 40B regulations.

In 2004, Natick adopted **Housing Overlay Option Plan (HOOP) Zoning Districts** around the Town Center. HOOP Districts are designed “to increase production of dwelling units affordable to persons and households of low and moderate income in a manner consistent with the character of the downtown area. Within any development under the HOOP regulations, at least 15% of the total number of dwelling units must meet the affordability requirements for households earning less than 80% of regional median income and households earning between 80 and 120% of regional median income.” Several multi-family developments have been built within the HOOP districts since the zoning was enacted.

The Massachusetts Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004 (Chapter 40R), encourages communities to create dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts, including a high percentage of affordable housing units, to be located near transit stations, in areas of concentrated development such as existing city and town centers, and in other highly suitable locations. Upon state review and approval of a local overlay district, communities become eligible for payments from a Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund, as well as other financial incentives. The Modera development on the former Natick Paperboard site was developed as a 40R project.

Projects built under smart growth and affordable housing regulations include (from the top) Kendall Crossing, South Natick Hills, Cloverleaf Apartments, and HOOP projects on East Central Street (Castle Courtyard) and Dewey Street.



Projects built under smart growth and affordable housing regulations include (from the top) a HOOP project on South Avenue and the 40R Modera project.



MAP 3.4: 40R AND HOOP DISTRICT PROJECTS

Post World War II Commercial & Industrial Development

Natick has five main commercial/industrial districts:

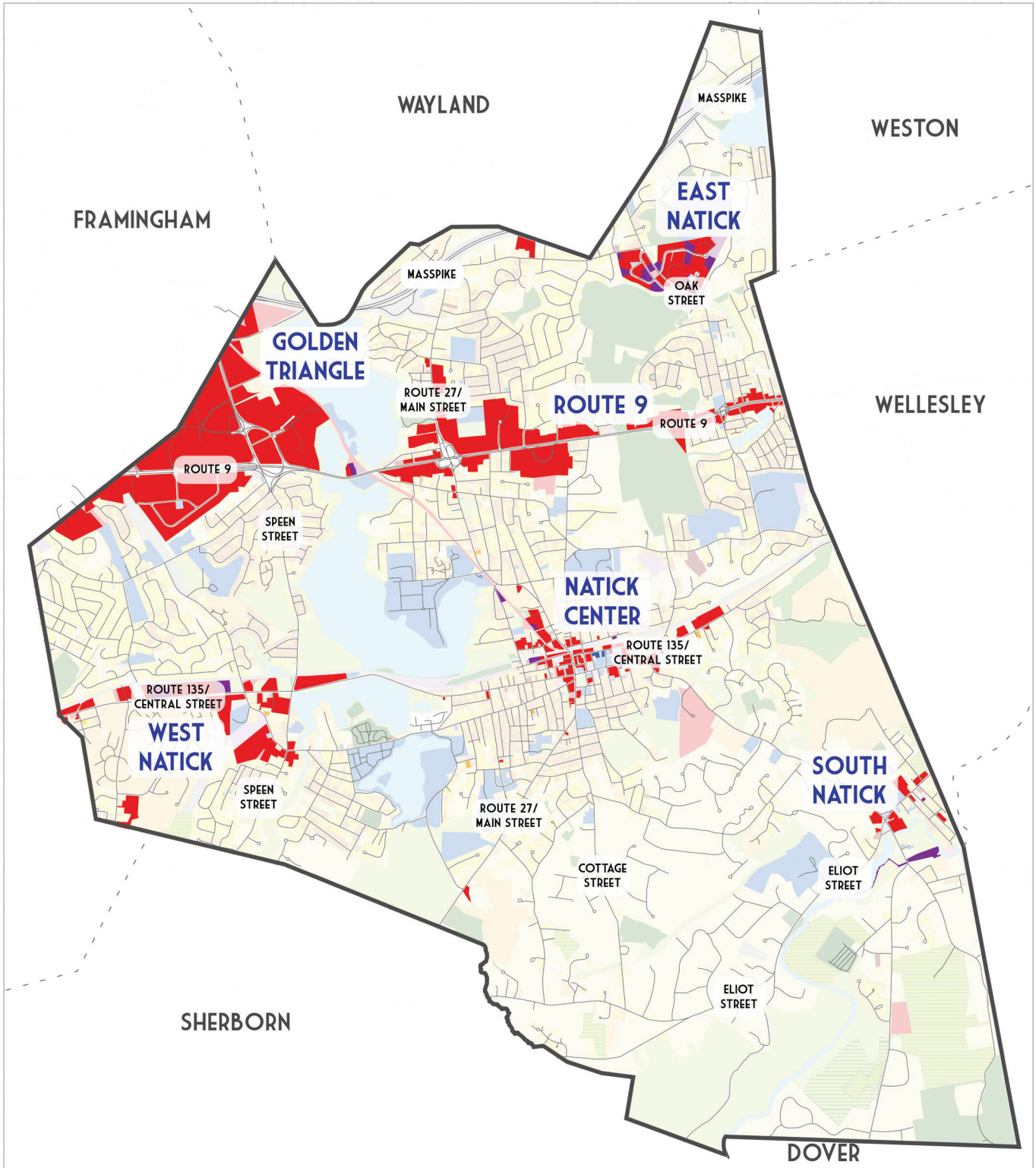
- + The Golden Triangle and Route 9
- + Natick Center
- + West Natick
- + South Natick
- + East Natick



The Natick Mall.

The Golden Triangle and Route 9

Shoppers World opened in 1951, just across the Framingham line, as New England’s first regional shopping center. That was followed by Sherwood Plaza in 1960 and the Natick Mall in 1966. Today, this area is known as “The Golden Triangle” - an area defined by Route 9, Route 30, and Speen Street, although the commercial activity extends considerably beyond these streets. The Golden Triangle is divided between Natick and Framingham. East of Speen Street is the Cloverleaf Marketplace Shopping Center with large tenants including Burlington (formerly the Burlington Coat Factory), Ethan Allen Furniture and Total Wine; the Cloverleaf and Avalon residential developments, Home Depot, Federal Express, Hampton Inn and the new MathWorks Lakeside campus (under construction).



LEGEND

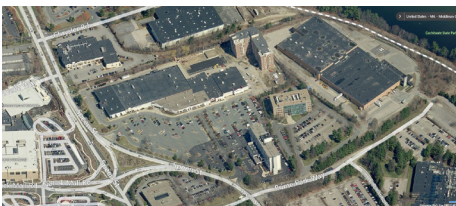
- | | |
|--|--|
| Low Density Residential | Agriculture |
| Medium Density Residential | Forest |
| Multi-Family Residential | Conservation |
| High Density Residential | Cemetery |
| Commercial | Wetland |
| Industrial | Vacant |
| Mixed Use | Water |
| Recreational | |
| Urban Public/Institutional | |
| Transportation/Powerline/Utility | |

MAP 3.5: COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CLUSTERS





The density of activity in The Golden Triangle continues to increase, as single-story structures and parking lots are replaced by retail and office buildings with associated parking garages. The Natick Mall expansion in 2008 included the new 215 unit Nouvelle condominium development. The Nouvelle, together with the 183 unit Cloverleaf and 407 unit Avalon apartment buildings on the east side of Speen Street, completed in 2008 and 2013, have begun to transform this area into a mixed-use district, although with the exception of the Nouvelle, residential uses are not fully integrated. The Cloverleaf and Avalon apartment complexes are tucked behind commercial plazas. Poor pedestrian access and connections makes these residential developments feel more like islands than a part of the larger district or Natick community. The Town is actively working to improve connectivity in the area, highlighted by the Cochituate Rail Trail which will connect the residential buildings to both Speen Street and Natick Center.



South of Route 9 and west of Speen Street is the Sherwood Plaza Shopping Center with large tenants including PETCO, the Christmas Tree Store and Dick's Sporting Goods. Behind Sherwood Plaza is an industrial district with a variety of uses including educational and day care facilities, a swim school, office space and the Museum of World War II, in addition to industrial uses and a new LA Fitness Center. Recent activity also has included the introduction of some creative uses such as biotech, life science and incubator space.



Additional commercial uses continue east along Route 9 to the Wellesley border. Route 9 is a prime location for a number of prominent and sizable commercial businesses including the MathWorks Apple Hill Campus, Cognex, auto dealers and home furnishings stores, as well as a number of businesses including Starbucks and other restaurants occupying smaller spaces. Many of the larger buildings were developed in the 1980s and 1990s. Parcels along the eastern part of Route 9 are relatively shallow and back up to residential properties, limiting opportunities for significant redevelopment/modernization.



From top: Nouvelle at the Natick Mall, aerial view of the Cloverleaf Shopping Center, Sherwood Village and an office building and the new LA Fitness Center behind Sherwood Plaza.

Clockwise from top left: Development along Route 9 includes the Home Town Center home furnishings strip mall, Cognex, the shopping center at the intersection of Routes 9 and 127, and smaller scale businesses near Route 9 and Oak Street.



Natick Center

Another prominent commercial area is Natick Center. Because of the rapid growth that occurred after the fire of 1874, there is a cohesive 19th Century character (High Victorian Gothic style). In 1977 the Town obtained a National Register Historic District designation for the Center, which includes 15 historically significant buildings.

Natick Center, served by the Natick Center Commuter Rail Station, is zoned as a "Downtown Mixed Use District." This zoning allows a mix of uses, including single and multi-unit residential, commercial and office. Additionally, on the north edge of downtown, are two small industrial zones. Two of the industrial buildings in this zone have been rehabilitated into the Natick Mills and Dean residential developments. The former Natick Paperboard site, now Modera, a 150-unit apartment complex, is just north of this district.



Natick Center contains a mix of land uses and building typologies. There are numerous small businesses, restaurants, stores, and artist studios. Civic uses, clustered along East Central Street east of the Town Common, include the Town Hall, Morse Institute Library and the Police and Fire Department Headquarters. Several large historic churches occupy prominent corner locations. The historic Natick Center Fire Station was repurposed for use as The Center for Arts in Natick (see Chapter 6).



There are also over 1,800 dwelling units, housing approximately 4,000 people within the ½ mile walkshed of Natick Center. The two main corridors include the predominately commercial Route 27 running north-south and the commercial/civic corridor running east-west along Route 135. The two corridors meet at the Town Common. Non-historic buildings in Natick Center vary in quality and size, especially in the periphery of the immediate core. One-story buildings and poor ground floor renovations mar some parts of the neighborhood. Auto-related uses and buildings set back behind parking lots have broken the street edge in certain areas.¹



From the top: The historic Main Street buildings are filled with ground floor storefronts and restaurants, while Central Street is lined with a number of public buildings and churches.

Clockwise from above: Restaurants, stores and personal services continue north on Washington Street; artist studios and public art on Adams Street; the north side of South Avenue has a number of auto repair businesses.

¹ Source: The 2016 Natick Center Plan, prepared by MAPC.





From the top: Retail and office space as well as a vacant building along Route 135 in West Natick.



Office and light industrial buildings in the East Natick Industrial Park.

West Natick

Commercial and industrial development continues in a third district along Route 135 in West Natick, near the West Natick Commuter Rail Station west of Town Center. Much of the development occurred in the 1950s through the 1980s. Current uses include the Roche Brothers grocery store, a Hess service station, a strip mall with one floor of office space above, several two- to three-story office buildings and one-story industrial buildings. There are a number of underutilized or vacant buildings and parcels. The MBTA parking lot has been discussed as a potential site for transit-oriented development.

A small cluster of commercial development around the intersection of Speen and Pond Streets includes professional office space and a small strip mall with convenience retail and services. The strip mall was built in the 1970s while most of the professional office space was built in the 1980s.

East Natick

The East Natick Industrial Park extends east and west of Oak Street to the north of Rathburn Road. The industrial park, built primarily in the 1960s, has some buildings dating back to the 1950s as well as buildings from the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to industrial uses, several commercial sports training facilities, a daycare, a private school, and a realty office are located in the industrial park.

South Natick

South Natick has a small commercial district clustered around the intersection of Union and Eliot Streets. Office space for professional services and realty firms, as well as several small food establishments, are located in historic buildings within the John Eliot National Register Historic District.



Commercial uses and vacant space in South Natick buildings.

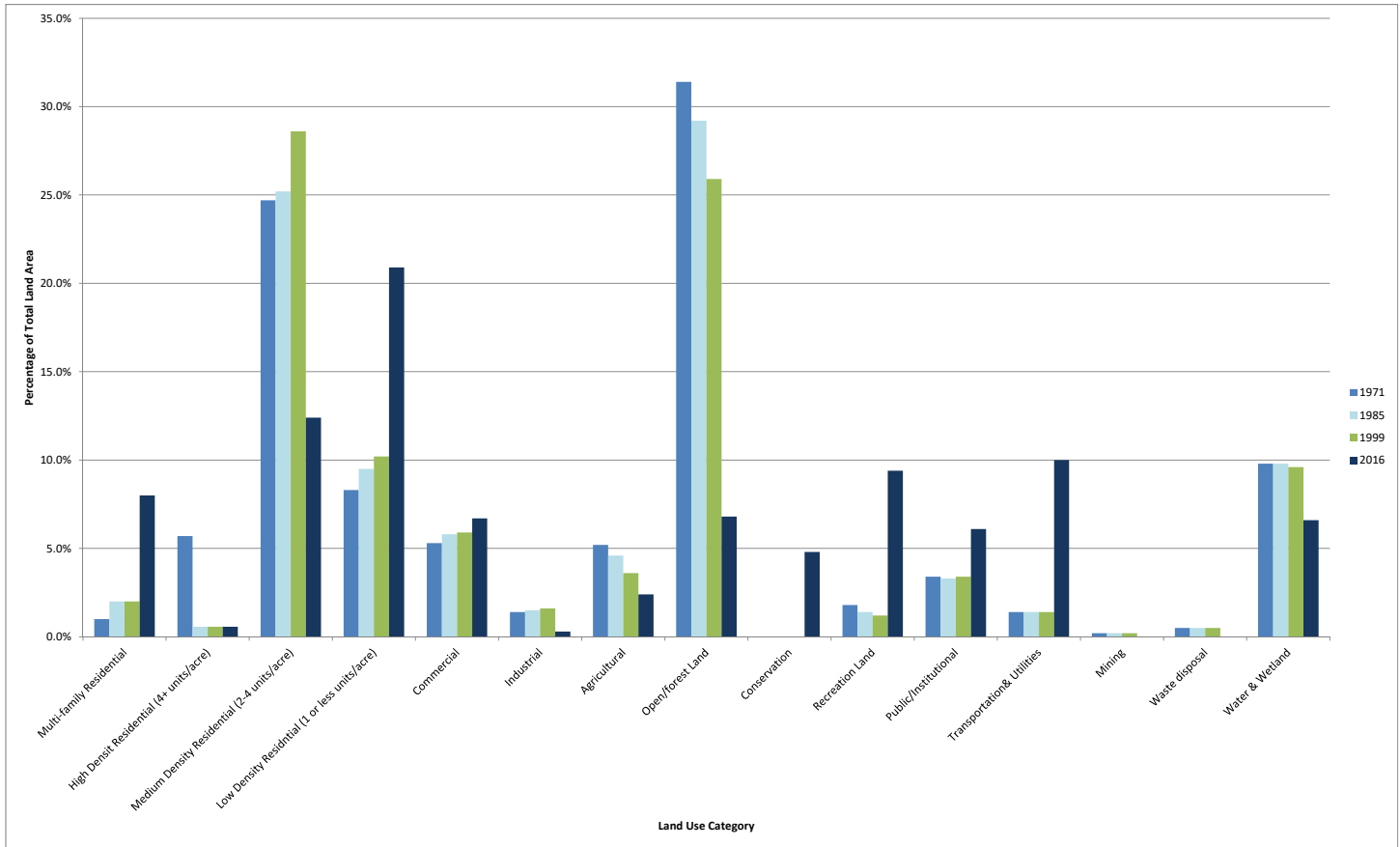


FIGURE 3.1: LAND USE CHANGES 1971 TO 2016

Changes in Land Use

The current breakdown in land use, based on 2016 Natick Assessing Department data and Natick GIS data, is shown in Table 3.3. Figure 3.1 illustrates land use changes from 1971 to 2016. Note: Exact comparisons are difficult to make because available land use classification information differs between years.

The numbers represent a snapshot in time and were based on the information available at the time they were assembled (2016). They do not reflect updates in information that may have occurred since that time. In addition, developing these breakdowns is not an exact science for several reasons:

- + Assessors data and GIS data are not always perfectly matched as they are not necessarily updated at exactly the same time.
- + Assessors data includes parcels of land, but does not include roadways.
- + Parcels which contain more than one use are frequently only classified by the Assessing Department and/or GIS as one use.

The general land use patterns and trends illustrated here provide valuable background information. Many regulatory and grant programs require that the numbers be categorized and compiled in very specific ways; new calculations would need to be developed to meet those specific requirements.

LAND USE	% OF TOTAL LAND AREA	TOTAL ACRES
Residential	46.9%	4,790
Open/Forest/Conservation	6.89%	69,106
Conservation	4.8%	495
Transportation (including roads, rail tracks and stations)	10.0%	1,023
Recreational	9.4%	961
Commercial	6.7%	687
Water and Wetland	6.6%	673
Institutional/Public	6.1%	656
Agricultural	2.4%	241
Industrial	0.3%	29
TOTAL	100%	10,216

TABLE 3.3: 2016 TOWN-WIDE LAND USE

Source: Natick Assessors Office Data

During the 1990s and into the new millennium, substantial subdivision development occurred wherever available land could be acquired, consuming a significant amount of woodland and open land, as well as reusing some former industrial land. Today, 4,790 acres (47%) of Natick's total land area is classified as residential; residential use represented 40% of total land use in 1971. Agricultural land declined by 162 acres (30%) between 1971 and 1999 and by an additional 128 acres (35%) between 2000 and 2016. Land classified as recreation increased by 773 acres (410%) between 1971 and 2016.

During the 1971-1999 period, land classified as urban development (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, transportation) increased by 798 acres (15.1%). The largest increase was in land classified as residential, which increased by 708 acres. Between 1999 and 2016, land classified as urban development (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and transportation uses) increased by 1,064 acres (17%). The amount of land classified as residential increased by only 1%, while the amount of land classified as commercial (includes both office and retail) increased by 13.5%. The largest increase was in land classified as public or institutional use which increased by 274 acres (78%).

The 1970 population occupied about 0.13 acres per person (dividing the total acreage classified as residential by the 1970 population of 31,057), but, as individual lot sizes grew, an additional 0.64 acres per person were developed to accommodate the additional 1113 persons added to the population between 1970 and 2000. Although there is still some development of single family homes on large lots, much of the recent residential development has been in multi-family developments, reducing the amount of land per person. The 2014 population of 34,230 (source: American Community Survey estimate) occupied approximately 0.14 acres per person. In 1971, multi-family residential represented 2.5% of all residential land use (by acreage). Today it represents 17%.

Assessor's data for 2016 shows approximately 32 acres of commercial land, 174 acres of residential land and 6 acres of industrial land as undeveloped but potentially developable. This land is spread out around town, and much of it is wetland. It is included in Open/Forest/Conservation category in Table 3.3.

Natick: Our Community Yesterday and Today, prepared in 2007 as part of Natick 360, reported several development patterns. "First, although there was little land left for commercial/industrial development, this type of development continued in Natick, using previously-developed lands in redevelopment projects. The largest of these was the 596,000 square foot Natick Mall expansion. Secondly, a substantial amount of the recently-approved or proposed residential development is either in the form of special permit developments associated with the HOOP District as part of town-planned downtown revitalization, or in the Chapter 40B developments being proposed for vacant lands that are zoned for single family residential developments." The South Natick Hills 40B development, a 268-unit complex built in 2013, added a significant residential cluster at the southern end of Main Street/Route 27 in South Natick. The neighborhood, not the site, had previously been exclusively single family homes. This residential development, along with development of the Cloverleaf, Avalon and Nouvelle in The Golden Triangle, added a substantial residential component to areas of Town which were previously non-residential in nature.



From the top: Construction underway at the former American Legion Building on West Central Street, the town-owned Middlesex Avenue parking lot and the Saint Patrick's property.



Aerial view of the former Sam's Club property.

Current Development Projects + Proposals

There is significant development interest and activity in Natick today. In the Town Center, several mixed-use redevelopment projects are underway. The site of the former one-story "Town Paint" building on Main Street facing the Common is being redeveloped into the Residences on the Common, a four to five floor mixed-use building with 4000 square feet of ground floor commercial/restaurant space and 32 housing units above. The historic former American Legion Building on West Central Street is currently being rehabilitated and expanded into a two and three floor mixed-use building with ground floor retail/restaurant space and 11 residential units on the upper floors.

MathWorks is constructing its new Lakeside campus in The Golden Triangle. There are also a number of current development plans and proposals, including:

In and around the Town Center:

- + Two of the town-owned parking lots in Natick Center (South Avenue and Middlesex Avenue) have been discussed as potential garage sites; conversations with developers indicated that a developer's interest in the parcels would be contingent upon being able to develop residential units above the garage. The Board of Selectmen have appropriated funding for a site-specific assessment of a town-funded garage on the Middlesex Avenue lot. The assessment is to include scale of the garage, potential programming for other uses (e.g., ground floor retail), environmental issues, cost and funding options, in addition to a conceptual design.
- + The Saint Patrick's property at the east end of the Town Center has been proposed for reuse as a mixed-use development with ground-floor retail and commercial space on Route 135 and residential use on the remainder of the property. The proposed project was rejected by Town Meeting.

In and around the Golden Triangle:

- + A planned development (currently under construction) for the former Sam's Club site at the northeast corner of Speen Street and Route 9 includes a 130 room hotel and a 165 unit age-restricted (over age 62 - not assisted living) residential building.
- + The Golden Triangle is the subject of a planning study that was conducted concurrently with this Master Plan and looked at potential development/redevelopment opportunities and associated impacts on transportation infrastructure. The planning study resulted in a development vision and implementation strategy for the area.

In and Around South Natick:

- + A developer is working on a proposed cluster housing project for the Wayside Farm property off of Rockland Street.



- + Several farms are slated to come on the market or have recently sold, including the Century Farms horse farm on South Street in South Natick, the Wynona Horse Farm on Union Street and the former WindyLo Nursery on Eliot Street.
- + A portion of both Lookout Farm and the Hunnewell Estate have been mentioned as potential development sites, although no specific plans have been put forward.



Other Commercial and Industrial Districts:

- + Some of the underutilized parcels and/or vacant buildings along Route 135 by the West Natick Station may also be potential redevelopment opportunities - one property owner has already explored a housing project there with the Planning Board. The West Natick Station parking lot is another potential development site in this area.
- + The East Natick Industrial Park and the Industrial Park south of Sherwood Plaza have underutilized buildings and/or parcels that could see some redevelopment activity.
- + The intersections of Route 9 with Main Street (Route 27) and with Oak Street provide some opportunity for redevelopment of older commercial uses, potentially for mixed-use. The 9/27 Plaza on the northeast corner of the Route 9/Route 27 Interchange has recently been updated with new retail space facing Route 27.



From the top: Aerial view of the Wayside Farm property, entrance sign for the Century Farm and the Windy Low Nursery.



Clockwise from above: Entrance to West Natick MBTA Station parking lot; property for lease in the East Natick Industrial Park and the intersection of Route 9 and Oak Street.



Zoning

The centerpiece of a comprehensive plan is the land use plan, which has to balance private property interests with the public's interests in environmental quality, services, facilities, infrastructure, transportation, and community economic development. The land use plan provides a policy framework for actions to promote the best possible future for a community. In Massachusetts, land use decisions lie almost entirely with local governments, although some exceptions exist. Under "home rule," cities and towns have quite a bit of latitude to regulate development. However, Massachusetts can be a challenging environment for local governments because the state zoning act is over forty years old and it does not fully reflect the principles of home rule. It also has not been brought in line with modern planning practices.

Communities can take steps to shape development through mechanisms like zoning and subdivision control, but regulation is not the only way to influence a future land use pattern. Infrastructure and utilities, open space acquisitions, and organizational tools such as local development corporations or special districts also have an impact on private investment decisions. Furthermore, while it is tempting to focus all major growth management policies on the fate of vacant land, it is a mistake to overlook the role that redevelopment plays in a community's economy and visual character. This is especially true in maturely developed suburbs like Natick, where "redevelopment" can mean anything from repurposing an old public school to the single-family teardowns and rebuild projects that can be seen in almost any neighborhood in town.

Natick's present Zoning Bylaw (ZBL), though amended many times over the years, is based on a comprehensive update and revision that Town Meeting approved in 1960. It provides for sixteen use districts and nine overlay districts as shown in Table 3.4 and Map 3.5. In some cases, the overlays in Natick cover all or substantial portions both of underlying use districts and other overlay districts. As a result, the zoning scheme in Natick is fairly complicated and sometimes seems to be in conflict. Today, approximately 85 percent of all land in Natick (including water and wetlands) is zoned for residential development.

Natick has clearly tried to stay current with new planning ideas and approaches to land use regulation. For example, the Town adopted a Subsidized Housing (SH) district in 1973, just four years after the legislature enacted G.L. c. 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law. Similarly, Natick was one of the earliest towns to experiment with zoning techniques to create affordable housing that "counts" on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory without relying on comprehensive permits. The Housing Overlay Option Plan (HOOP) districts were established in 1991, shortly after the state inaugurated what is now known as the Local Initiative Program, and the regulations and incentives for these districts were updated a decade later. Furthermore, Natick and Framingham collaborated to establish Highway Overlay District (HOD) zoning on Route 9 in both towns. The good news is that Natick has experience with innovations in regulatory reform. Unfortunately, Natick's pursuit of many land use techniques and difficulty integrating them into a coherent framework has produced a complicated, hard-to-follow ZBL that paints an unclear picture of the kind of place Natick wants to be. Areas of town with land uses that bear no relationship to existing zoning, due to the issuance of variances or simply the persistence of old "grandfathered" uses, exacerbate the "disconnects" between Natick's zoning regulations and Natick on the ground.

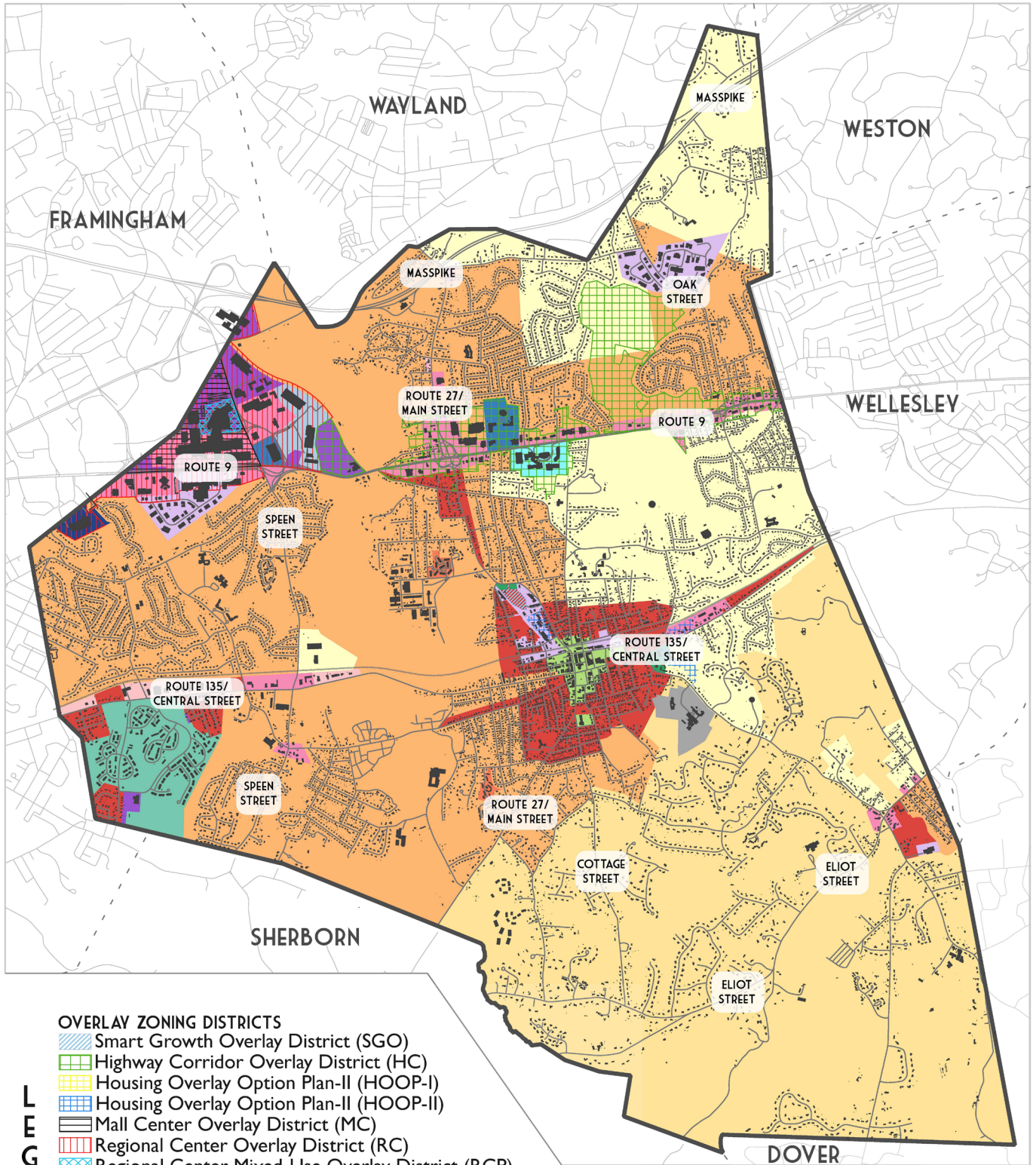
	USE DISTRICT	OVERLAY DISTRICT
1	Residential General (RG)	Floodplain (FP)
2	Residential Multiple (RM)	Regional Center Overlay (RC)
3	Residential Single (RS)	Highway Corridor Overlay (HC)
4	Planned Cluster Development (PCD)	Mall Center Overlay (MC)
5	Administrative & Professional (AP)	Housing Overlay Option Plan I (HOOP-I)
6	Subsidized Housing (SH)	Housing Overlay Option Plan II (HOOP-II)
7	Downtown Mixed Use (DM)	Regional Center Mixed-Use Overlay (RCP)
8	Commercial Two (CII)	Smart Growth Overlay (SGO)
9	Industrial One (InI)	Aquifer Protection District (APD)
10	Industrial Two (InII)	
11	Hospital (H)	
12	Highway Mixed Use I (HM-I)	
13	Highway Mixed Use II (HM-II)	
14	Highway Mixed Use III (HM-III)	
15	Limited Commercial (LC)	
16	Highway Planned Use (HPU)	

TABLE 3.4: NATICK ZONING DISTRICTS

Format, Structure, Organization

The more that zoning bylaws and ordinances conform to basic conventions – commonly used section titles, numbering, structure, and so forth – the easier it is for people to locate the information they need. The Natick ZBL can be hard to navigate because it is disorganized. Divided into six broad sections (Articles I through VI), the ZBL does not always have content where one would expect to find it – that is, the main section headings are not always indicative of where particular provisions can be found. A good example exists in the first section, Article I, Purpose and Authorization. Codes of all types usually begin with a title, legal citations (source of authority), scope, and procedures for adoption and amendment. Natick’s Article I has some of this content, but most of it consists of purpose statements for several (not all) of the Town’s zoning districts. However, the actual list of districts and references to the Zoning Map do not appear until Article II, which also has descriptions (in various formats) of the boundaries of each district.

The ZBL numbering system is inconsistent. For example, the sections in Article I are identified as Section 100, 200, etc., yet elsewhere, the ZBL adopts a convention such as III-A, III-H, only to revert to Section 320 and back to Roman numerals and letters again. Similarly, section titles often appear in all capital letters, but not always. In



OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICTS

- Smart Growth Overlay District (SGO)
- Highway Corridor Overlay District (HC)
- Housing Overlay Option Plan-II (HOOP-I)
- Housing Overlay Option Plan-II (HOOP-II)
- Mall Center Overlay District (MC)
- Regional Center Overlay District (RC)
- Regional Center Mixed-Use Overlay District (RCP)

ZONING DISTRICTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential General Residential Multiple Residential-Single A Residential-Single B Residential-Single C Commercial-I Commercial-II Limited Commercial Hospital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative & Professional Planned Cluster Development Downtown Mixed-Use Industrial-I Industrial-II Highway Mixed-I Highway Mixed-II Highway Mixed-III Highway Planned Use |
|---|---|

MAP 3.5: EXISTING ZONING



some places, the headings are in sentence case. People familiar with the ZBL may be accustomed to these irregularities, but new users will not find the numbering system helpful, most likely finding it confusing. Errors and inconsistencies like these often surface in zoning bylaws and ordinances that have been amended, piece-meal, over a period of many years. This is exactly what has happened in Natick.

Sometimes information is placed in non-intuitive ways. In Section 200, Definitions, Natick provides definitions for “bonus” and “bonus project” (pertaining to The Golden Triangle), but several pages later, the term “nonbonus project” appears. Though listed in alphabetical order, “nonbonus project” actually makes little sense to the average reader because there is no context for it. Where several defined terms relate to a specific section or provision of the ZBL, it makes sense to keep them together even if doing so intrudes on the alphabetical listing of terms in the Definitions section. This can be accomplished in ways that will be obvious to readers, e.g., by applying a color overlay to a group of definitions so it is clear that they belong together.

One issue that surfaces in almost every zoning revision project is the placement of definitions. Some communities decide to put all definitions in a section so named, either near the beginning or at the end of the bylaw; other communities put all of the “umbrella” definitions in one section and define unique terms in the section in which they appear. Zoning practice has trended toward a single section for all definitions, and for good reason. In Natick and many towns with older zoning bylaws, the definitions are randomly scattered throughout the ZBL. For example, there are subsections of definitions under Signs, Outdoor Lighting, the Aquifer Protection District, and the “Smart Growth” Overlay in addition to the definitions in Section 200.

At 115 pages, Article III, Use Regulations, is unusually long. It combines a Table of Uses, special use regulations, and special district regulations into one long, largely undifferentiated chapter. While the intent of packaging the use regulations this way may be noble, Article III is actually quite confusing because some subsections provide details about a particular land use while others contain special rules for overlay districts. The absence of any helpful, visually recognizable transitions makes it easy to become lost in Article III.

Access and Ease of Use

The ZBL needs better navigation aids, such as:

- + An alphabetized index at the end of the ZBL.
- + Redesign of the Table of Uses and Table of Intensity Regulations by Zoning District to make them easier to read and interpret. For example, applying a color gradient in the Table of Intensity Regulations by Zoning District would provide a simple visual cue about the relative density or intensity of use in Natick’s zoning districts. Similarly, the Table of Uses can be color-coded to match the color scheme on the Zoning Map, thereby reinforcing the connection between uses and geography.
- + Graphics to illustrate key dimensional requirements.

- + The Table of Intensity Regulations by Zoning District could be replaced by a one-page layout for each zoning district, with the district’s dimensional requirements provided in text (outline) and graphic formats.
- + Better graphics to communicate the dimensional standards for off-street parking, with graphics placed on the same page as the corresponding text.
- + Permitting flowcharts showing the sequence of steps and timelines involved with various approval processes.
- + Hyperlinked cross-references that allow users of an online or PDF version to navigate efficiently to sections of interest to them.
- + Reorganized, consolidated sections that are designed for access and navigability by a variety of users, from professionals accustomed to working with municipal codes to homeowners wanting to know if they can create an accessory apartment on their property.

Language Clarity

A close reading of Natick’s zoning reveals many instances of unclear language. “Unclear language” means errors in diction, syntax, punctuation, or any combination of these that can reduce the readability of text. Omissions and duplications also affect readability, e.g., when a definition is unclear because of omitted words or phrases or because two terms have essentially the same meaning. For example, it is not clear how Natick differentiates “Apartment House” from “Dwelling, Multifamily,” since both are structures designed for occupancy by three or more households. The prevalence of “legalese” also makes the ZBL hard to understand. Proofreading and editing out words and phrases such as “said [district]”, “such case” or “such permits,” and the oft-repeated phrase, “in accordance with,” would help to improve readability – and, as a result, make the ZBL easier to understand.

Very long sentences with multiple, complex clauses could be condensed and made much easier to read. The purpose statement for the Subsidized Housing (SH) district exemplifies this problem:

The intent of this Bylaw relating to the SH District is to result in the availability of sufficient land to accommodate dwelling units for people of low and moderate income so as to increase the number of dwelling units of subsidized housing in the Town to a total which meets the requirements of Chapter 40B, Sections 20–23, General Laws.

Clarity, Consistency, or Legal Concerns

As written, Natick’s Site Plan Review (SPR) provision is actually a special permit procedure in its entirety. It should be called a special permit and consolidated with special permits, or revised into an actual SPR procedure, either as an administrative staff function (sometimes called “minor SPR”) or a public process before the Planning Board, with a public hearing and simple majority vote; or some combination of these two approaches based on classes of use.² Site plan review can be used only to shape a project. On the other hand, in the special permit process, the full range of discretion is available to the granting authority. *This issue was addressed by an amendment to the Zoning Bylaw at the 2017 Spring Annual Town Meeting.*

² In *Y.D. Dugout v. Board of Appeals of Canton*, 357 Mass. 25, 31 (1970), the Supreme Judicial Court defined its understanding of site plan review as: “regulation of a use rather than its prohibition . . . (guiding) us in interpreting the (by-law) . . . as contemplating primarily the imposition for the public protection of reasonable terms and conditions.” The Supreme Judicial Court has repeatedly focused on distinguishing site plan review from the special permit process. See *Prudential Ins. Co. of America v. Board of Appeals of Westwood*, 23 Mass. App. Ct. 278 (1986); *Auburn v. Planning Bd. of Dover*, 12 Mass. App. Ct. 998 (1981).

The remarkably brief section devoted to nonconforming uses and structures (Section V-A) has not kept pace with changes in case law. There have been a dozen decisions since 1990 that fundamentally changed the practice of handling nonconforming uses and structures. Notably, Section V-A is short of the standards imposed by *Blasco v. Board of Appeals of Winchendon*, 31 Mass. App. Ct. 32 (1991), in which the court required that all available changes to nonconformities be listed in the bylaw. In addition, Section V-A does not distinguish extensions or alterations of nonconforming single-family or two-family dwellings from alterations of other types of buildings.

Special permit procedures and special permit granting criteria appear in various places throughout the ZBL. In addition to the “umbrella” special permit criteria in Article VI (for special permits granted by the Board of Appeals or Planning Board), there are special permit criteria in many sections with special use regulations. There is nothing wrong with tailoring decision standards to particular uses or settings, but the relationship between the use-specific criteria and the general special permit criteria in Article XI needs to be clear.

Density and Dimensional Regulations; Site Design

Format

The format of Natick’s ZBL makes it hard to find a specific section. New sections sometimes start at the subsection level without any “parent” title as a guide. Article IV, Intensity Regulations, illustrates this problem because there is no title, Article IV – Intensity Regulations, in the body of the ZBL. The pages simply transition from the end of Article III (which is actually Section 320) to Section IV-A, General Requirements. All of the footnotes to the Table of Intensity Regulations by Zoning District appear before the Table, not after it. To further complicate matters, the Table has a heading error, so unless a reader is knowledgeable about zoning, the minimum setback requirements may not be obvious.

Lot Nonconformity

There are aspects of Natick’s dimensional requirements that seem inconsistent with established (largely pre-zoning) development patterns. This is noticeably true when it comes to minimum setbacks, and especially front yard setbacks. Some of the most attractive parts of Natick are the older neighborhoods that grew organically before zoning imposed fixed dimensions on house lots. Given the large number of nonconforming (small) lots in Natick (see Map 3.6), the Town will want to look at whether the minimum lot area and setbacks required in the smaller-lot districts should be modified. Today, about 63 percent of all lots in Natick do not meet the minimum area requirement of the districts in which they are located. The rate of lot nonconformity is conspicuously high – over 70 percent – in older, established areas such as DM, RG, and CII. More importantly, the dimensional regulations would be easier to interpret and understand if the ZBL included illustrations to accompany the table and text descriptions.

Off-Street Parking

While minimum off-street parking requirements are often excessive in suburbs, Natick's are fairly benign. The Town has wisely established flexibility for parking bylaw compliance by providing for a system of "fee in lieu" payments to an off-street parking fund. Still, the parking lot design standards are prescriptive and not sensitive to odd-shaped lots. Multifamily parking requirements of two spaces for one- or two-bedroom units in the D-M district, where residents have convenient access to commuter rail, should be revisited.

General practice today is to pull recommended site design standards and guidelines into a set of development guidelines cited in the ZBL. The issue is whether design-related content belongs in zoning or is best handled through some related means.

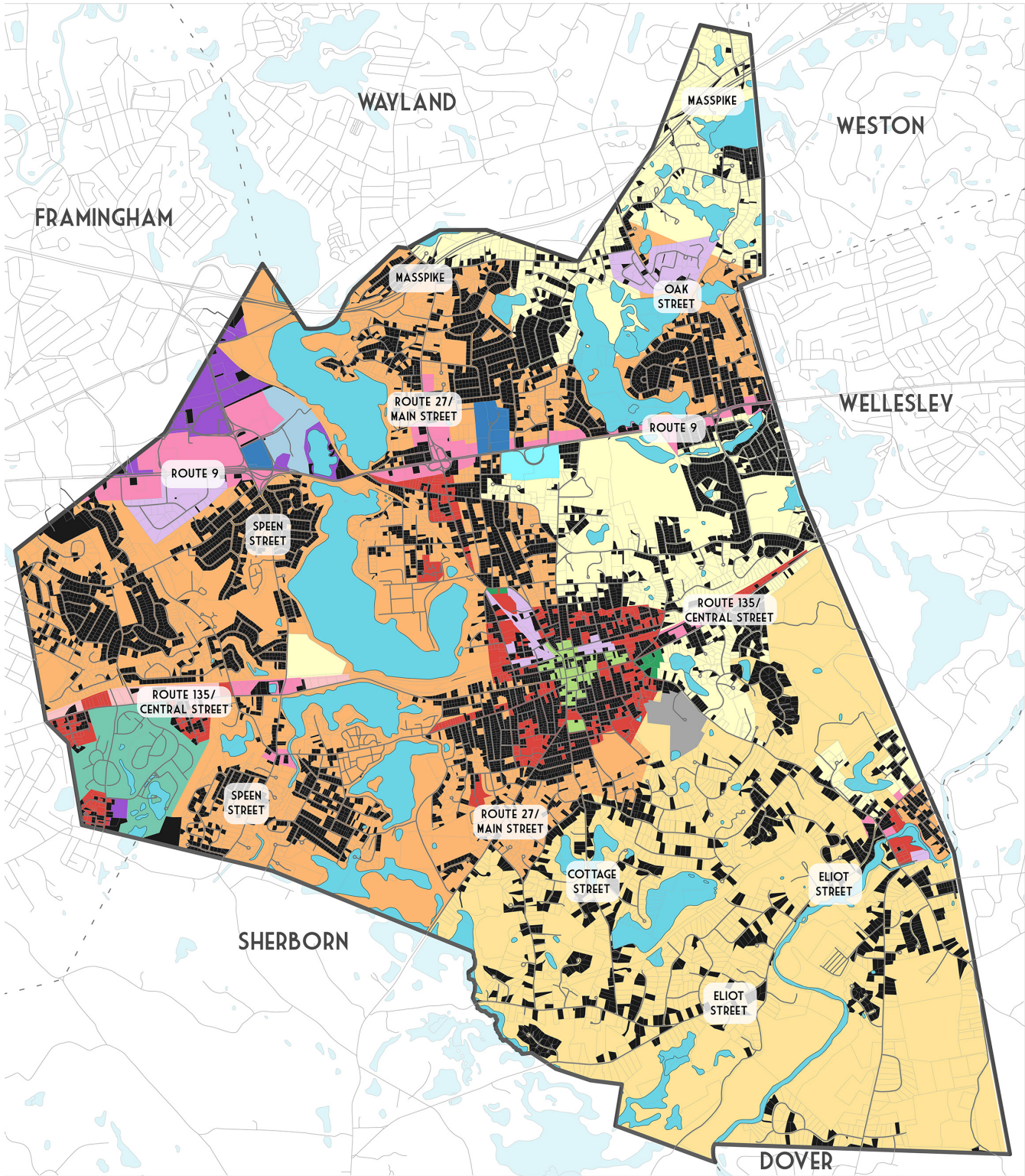
Signage

The sign bylaw (Section V-H) should be substantially revised by adding graphics and bringing it up-to-date with current constitutional law decisions, and current sign technology and design topics. Natick seems to prohibit blade signs, which is odd given the urban character of its downtown business district. Many of the merchants in Downtown Natick want to install blade signs precisely because they cater to pedestrians.

Open Space by Design

Natick has adopted many related/similar provisions that could be revisited in order to simplify the ZBL. For example, Cluster Development is allowed by special permit in the RS-A district on a tract of at least 40 acres. A Single-Family Townhouse Cluster Development can be permitted as of right, subject to site plan review (a special permit process), in the RS-B, -D, and -E districts on at least 1,000,000 sq. ft., or in the RS-C district on at least 40 acres. Further, cluster developments are allowed on smaller sites and at a higher density in the AP district, and there is another "comprehensive" cluster development option available in the RS-B district on sites with 1,000,000 sq. ft. or more of land. While it may be that each of these cluster options addresses some unique qualities of a district or part of town, it is very unusual to see multiple cluster development bylaws in one town. Moreover, in maturely developed communities like Natick, often the most-needed cluster design tools are actually intended to work with small sites, not large tracts of land.

If the Town wants to encourage cluster design, the "best practices" model in Massachusetts today is sometimes called "Natural Resource Protection Zoning" (NRPZ) and is part of the Commonwealth's "Smart Growth" toolkit. Instead of putting developers through a special permit process, the NRPZ approach requires cluster design in new residential developments and provides an opt-out by special permit. Alternatively, Natick could simply allow both cluster design and conventional subdivisions by right, and let the applicant choose. These provisions can be part of the development regulations for the residential districts. There really is no need for multiple cluster provisions.



LEGEND

- | | |
|--|--|
| BASE ZONING DISTRICTS | |
| ■ Residential General | ■ Downtown Mixed-Use |
| ■ Residential Multiple | ■ Industrial-I |
| ■ Residential-Single A | ■ Industrial-II |
| ■ Residential-Single B | ■ Highway Mixed-I |
| ■ Residential-Single C | ■ Highway Mixed-II |
| ■ Commercial-I | ■ Highway Mixed-III |
| ■ Commercial-II | ■ Highway Planned Use |
| ■ Limited Commercial | ■ Non-Conforming Lots |
| ■ Hospital | |
| ■ Administrative & Professional | |
| ■ Planned Cluster Development | |

MAP 3.6: EXISTING LOT SIZE CONFORMITY



Missing Topics

Natick's ZBL does not include some topics found in many zoning ordinances and bylaws in Eastern Massachusetts. The omissions may be the result of policy decisions made by the Town or because the ZBL has not been updated in a long time. In no particular order, the missing topics include the following:

Definitions

During a review of the ZBL and interviews with local stakeholders, several terms that are not currently defined in Natick's ZBL were identified. To modernize the use regulations, the following should be defined and provided for as principal or accessory uses (or both):

- + Adult day care
- + Ambulatory care center
- + Bed and breakfast
- + Electric charging stations
- + Reconstruction
- + Short-term vehicle rental
- + Warehouse

Policy Framework

It is impossible to conduct a comprehensive zoning review without tackling important land use policy questions. For example, people may agree that home occupations should be allowed in all of Natick's zoning districts, but will they feel the same way about large family day care homes with as many as ten children enrolled, plus a day care assistant (an employee)? People may say they want to grow Natick's tax base and remove barriers to business development, but is the Town prepared to embrace new ways of zoning for commercial and industrial development? How willing is Natick to trade discretionary special permits for new zoning that can do a better job of guiding development in predictable ways? Under Natick's existing regulatory scheme, two boards with a different sense of purpose and different roles and responsibilities – the Planning Board and Board of Appeals – share the job of special permit granting authority. This arrangement, though common throughout Massachusetts, creates a risk of inconsistent special permit decisions and fragmented land use policies. And finally, what will the Town's policy be for changes to nonconforming business uses? Will they be allowed to change to other (less detrimental) nonconforming uses over time, or will any future change force them to become conforming uses?

Issues and Opportunities

Future development is a topic of great interest in community discussions. While many people support new development and the ability to create jobs, strengthen the tax base and provide increased housing options, a number of issues (both positive and negative) have been raised:

- + Development-related traffic and congestion and the need to review traffic plans during development.
- + The density and ratio of developed vs. open land needs to be balanced.
- + The balanced residential/commercial/industrial base (live/work balance) should be maintained.
- + New development should be sustainable smart development.
- + Natick is losing its character and new development needs to be more compatible with existing development character.
- + Development needs to happen in more thought out way; an active review of available land and property would allow for advance planning.
- + The development process should be more streamlined so that Natick remains competitive.
- + Land for cluster development should be publicly acquired to allow for more control over character and density.
- + The impact on town services of multi-use tenant development needs to be assessed.
- + Neighborhood mixed-use development and sidewalks will help to promote walkability.
- + The Town has a considerable amount of privately owned land with minimal protection – land that might not be protected in the future (e.g. Chapter 61, 61A and 61B parcels).
- + There is a lot of development/over-development occurring. It is important to keep existing trees.
- + Siting for a large scale renewable energy facility should be identified.
- + There are major parcels of land used by town, state or federal government (for example, the National Guard property) that might be declared surplus property at some point. These provide the Town of Natick with an opportunity to obtain the land before it is developed.
- + Zoning laws should be reviewed to ensure that growth is controlled.

Issues specifically related to the Town Center include:

- + The need for additional parking and potential structured parking.
- + The desire for more restaurants, social space, lighting, seating.
- + The desire for a broader mix of uses, and the Town's ability to influence that mix.
- + The revitalization of Natick Center should continue.
- + The desire for more Downtown housing options for ALL ages, including small affordable homes.
- + The desire for be maximum building height limits and cohesive transitions between adjacent uses and districts.
- + Building heights appropriate to preserve a critical mass of commercial space should be encouraged.
- + The lack of good-quality signage for public and private properties.
- + The desire for more child-friendly public spaces and infrastructure in the Center (playgrounds, picnic tables, water features, etc.), particularly around the Common.
- + There should be public restroom signage.
- + The Town doesn't control enough land to make changes.
- + Town Center activities and developments should embrace the area's history, culture and environmental heritage.
- + Office and service uses on upper floors are critical to support ground-floor shops and restaurants; it should not all be converted to residential use.
- + Change of uses in existing commercial properties should be encouraged.
- + The need for an improved pedestrian environment, including sidewalks, to encourage vitality.
- + The need to boost the Center's visibility to residents as well as other potential visitors.
- + The desire to change zoning to allow/encourage a boutique hotel.



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.



R1.1

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 Tibbets Street) (currently In-1 with a HOOP I overlay - HOOP I overlay should continue).

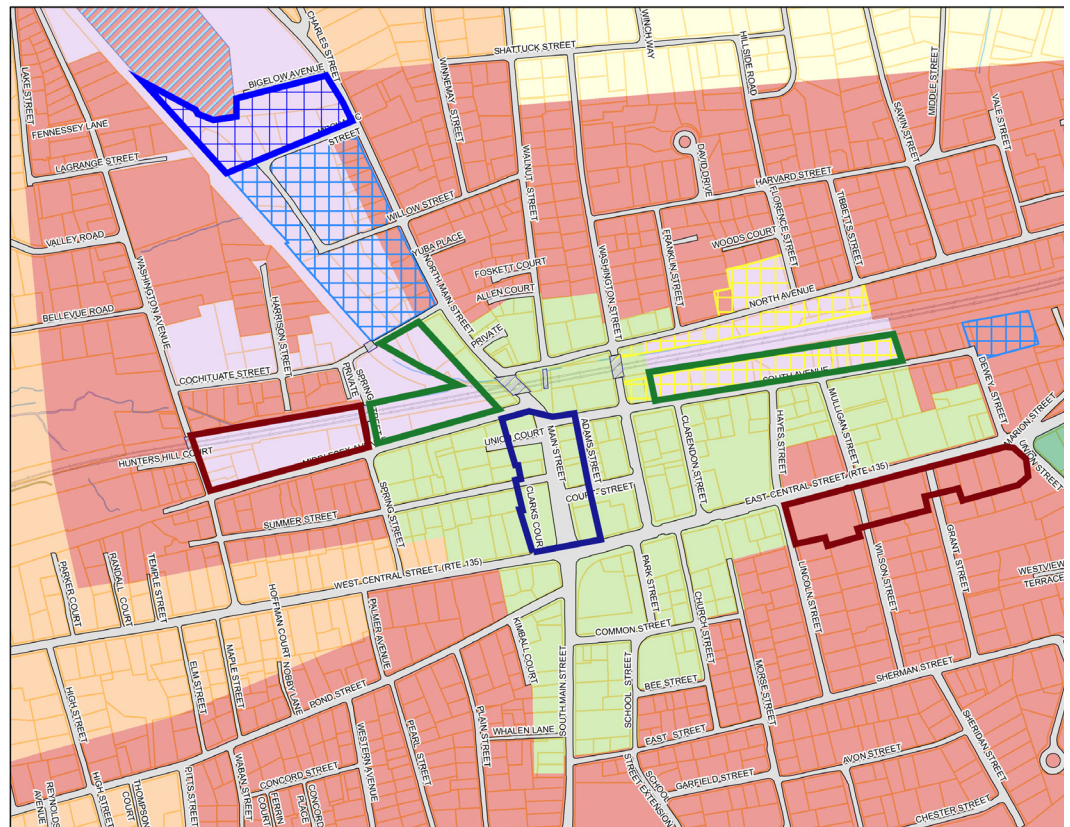
Rezoning the Industrial I zones would result in a 4.4 percent reduction in the amount of land in IND-1 districts town-wide (a 3.8 acre reduction). Although existing businesses would be allowed to remain as non-conforming uses, there is concern that this zoning change could eventually force out long-time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

EXISTING ZONING

- RG
- DM
- IND - I
- RSA
- HOOP - I
- HOOP - II
- RSC

NEW ZONING

- DM-TRANSITION
- DM - NR
- DM
- HOOP - II



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.

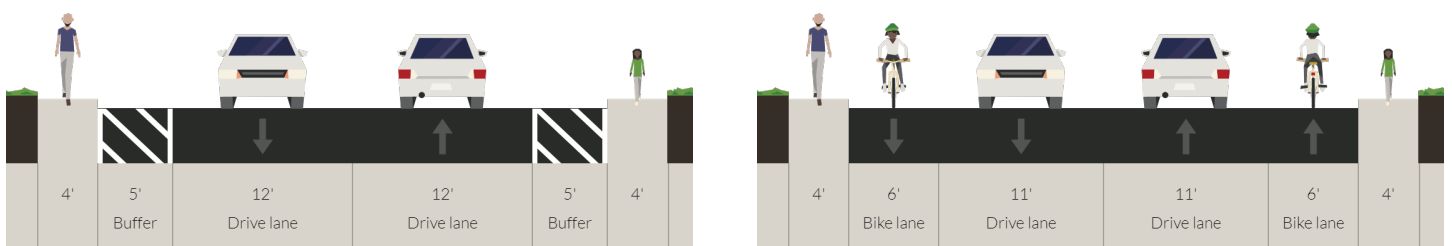


ON-GOING

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



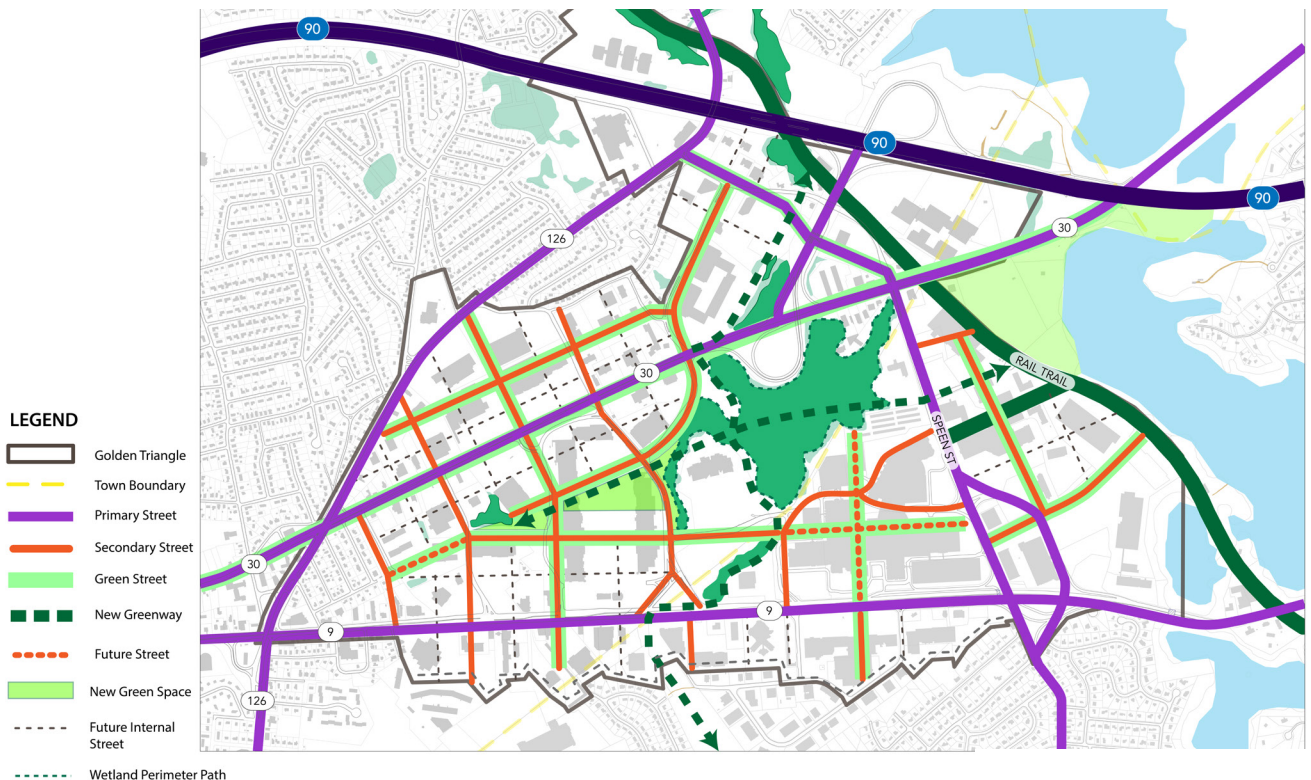
+ **Encourage mixed-use development including retail, office, entertainment and residential uses.** While it is not intended that every building and/or parcel should contain a mix of these uses, individual uses should be dispersed throughout the district and not concentrated in one or two locations.



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.



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:

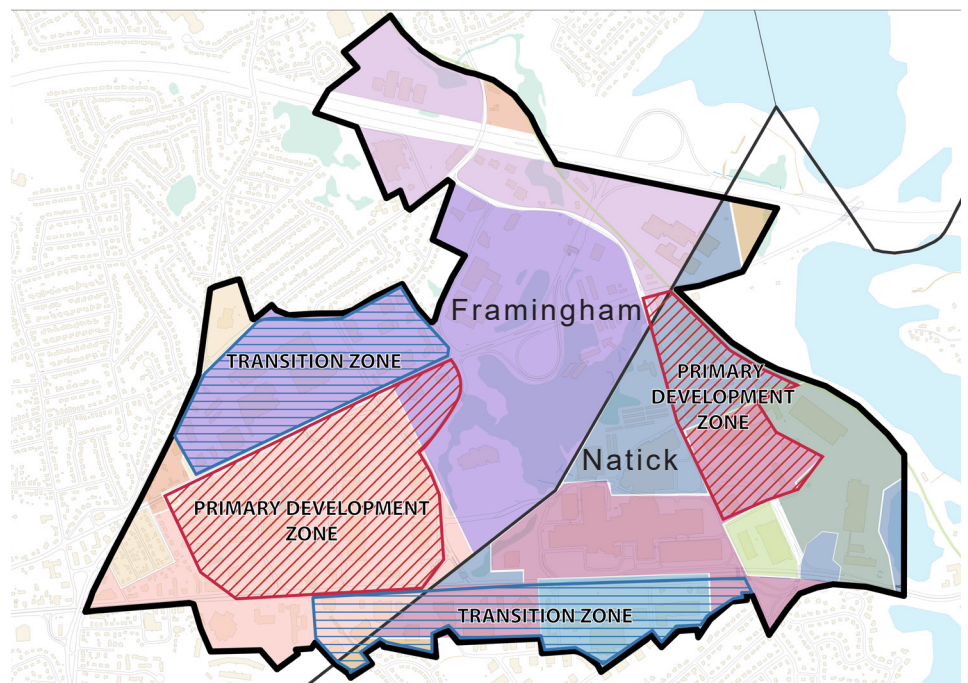
- + Ensure that new development is sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods improves the quality of life for residents.
- + Encourage and allow a more diverse mix of uses.
- + Break up large blocks or parcels into smaller walkable segments.
- + Concentrate height and density in specific locations.
- + Consider 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.



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

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4. Transportation

KEY FINDINGS

- + Natick's natural and man-made geography create barriers to transportation access, especially for local traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- + Traffic is concentrated onto heavily used corridors, such as Route 27, Route 135, Speen Street, and Route 9, that have high levels of congestion and crashes.
- + Transit ridership on MBTA commuter rail service from West Natick Station and Natick Center Station is rising.
- + There is good sidewalk coverage and pedestrian access in Natick Center and older neighborhoods, but limited facilities in other areas.
- + Bicycle facilities are lacking, though the Cochituate Rail Trail will improve bicycle access.
- + The most pressing parking need is for long-term week-day parking in Natick Center,

Introduction & Existing Conditions

Natick's transportation system comprises roadway and rail transportation routes that serve local needs as well as major regional connections. Many of these transportation corridors connect to other towns and destinations throughout the Boston area and New England as a whole.

Natick's long history and historic center have helped to make it an important transportation node from its early days. Natick has a robust and well-developed transportation network, especially its regional roadway network and commuter transit system. As a suburb of Boston, much of Natick's transportation system is oriented toward the Boston core. This is evident in the configuration of the regional roadways and the commuter rail line through town.

The purpose of this existing conditions assessment is to evaluate the transportation system in Natick, with a focus on summarizing the existing transportation infrastructure and traffic conditions in the Town. The study process entailed the following elements:

- + Assess the existing roadway, public transportation facilities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Natick.
- + Collect Traffic Impact Assessment reports, Functional Design Reports and other transportation studies in Natick and compile the data and findings.
- + Conduct an analysis of existing traffic conditions, including capacity/level of service (LOS) analysis for important signalized and unsignalized intersections in Natick.
- + Provide an assessment of existing public transit, pedestrian and bicycle, and parking conditions.
- + Provide an assessment of existing public transit, pedestrian and bicycle, and parking conditions.
- + Identify key issues, challenges, and priorities for improvements based on this review of existing conditions and other reporting.

Transportation System Context

Mode Split in Natick

Mode split is the percentage of travelers that use various types of transportation (driving alone, car-pooling, taking a bus, taking the commuter rail, etc.). Table 4.1 lists the commuting mode split observed among people who live in Natick, based on U.S. Census data from the American Community Survey, for the years 2009 through 2014.¹

YEAR	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Travel Mode	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Drove alone	78.00%	78.35%	80.12%	78.65%	77.35%	77.12%
Carpooled	5.65%	5.66%	4.86%	5.46%	5.96%	5.94%
Bus/Trolley Bus	0.49%	0.53%	0.40%	0.50%	0.51%	0.45%
Street Car/Trolley Car	0.15%	0.10%	0.08%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Subway/Elevated Train	1.42%	0.80%	0.91%	0.75%	0.80%	0.95%
Railroad	4.85%	5.73%	5.81%	6.84%	7.22%	7.19%
Ferryboat	0.04%	0.05%	0.07%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Taxicab	0.13%	0.06%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Motorcycle	0.13%	0.22%	0.08%	0.12%	0.09%	0.12%
Bicycle	0.26%	0.38%	0.39%	0.32%	0.57%	0.44%
Walk	1.55%	1.27%	1.14%	1.31%	1.61%	1.56%
Other	0.96%	1.20%	1.17%	1.21%	0.85%	0.76%
Worked at Home	5.45%	5.66%	4.91%	4.85%	5.03%	5.47%

TABLE 4.1: MODE SPLIT IN NATICK U.S. CENSUS JOURNEY-TO-WORK

The mode split of Natick residents for travel to work demonstrates that drive-alone travel is the dominant mode, although other modes still account for a significant 20 – 25 percent of trips. This is consistent with the characteristics of Natick’s transportation system: the transportation network is principally automobile-oriented, though there is good public transit access to the Boston core via commuter rail, as well as good pedestrian and bicycle access in many Town neighborhoods. Among households with workers 16 and over, more than 98 percent had at least one vehicle; more than 75 percent had two or more vehicles.

The proportion, or mode share, of each specific type of travel remained fairly consistent over the period from 2009 to 2014. This is true of driving modes, both drive-alone and car-pool, as well as walking and working at home. Bicycling has demonstrated a clear increase, but it remains at a very low level. The one clear trend in mode share is among travelers using some mode of public transportation (commuter rail, subway, bus, or ferry), which has increased from 6.96 percent in 2009 to 8.59 percent in 2014. The increasing trend in public transit ridership, in particular for commuter rail, paralleled the increasing service on the MBTA’s

¹ American Fact Finder, US Census, 2014 data

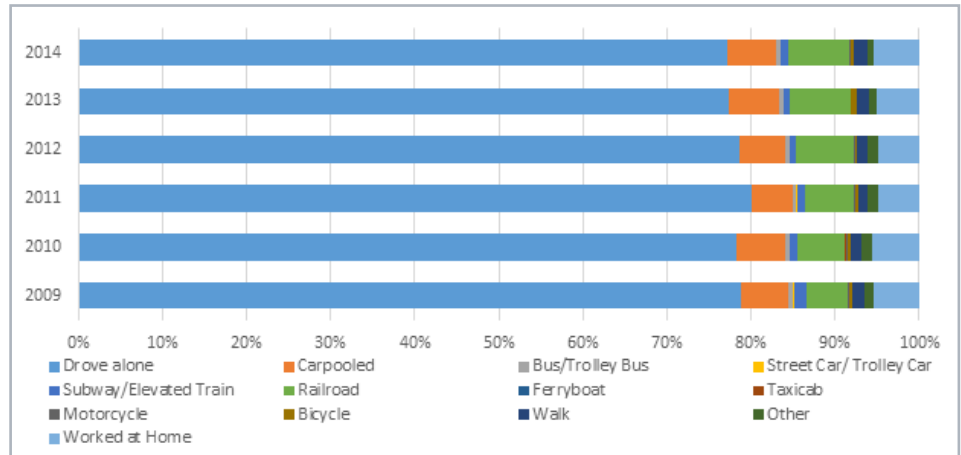


FIGURE 4.1. MODE SHARE IN NATICK

Framingham/Worcester Line (discussed below). This reflects an openness and desire for more travel options among many Natick residents, and indicates the importance of a robust multimodal transportation system analysis in order to develop a clear vision for the future Natick 2030+ Plan.

Commuting Patterns in Natick

According to the US Census “OnTheMap” application, Natick residents held 16,870 jobs as of the year 2014. The top 25 results from the application indicate that 14.8 percent of the primary jobs are within the Town of Natick and 14.3 percent of the primary jobs are in Boston (see Table 4.2).

This suggests that a significant amount of Natick’s population travels for work to Boston. With this demand for travel to Boston and the increase in utilization of public transportation shown in Figure 4.1, it is clear that public transportation and transit links to the Boston core are important for Natick’s future. The top 25 workplace destinations for Natick residents are shown below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2 show the commuting pattern of Natick residents by distance and direction. About 46 percent of the jobs are located within 10 miles of the Town. About 44 percent of the jobs are located in areas 10 to 24 miles from Natick. A majority of the commuters travel to and from the east, towards Boston. It is important to ensure that the transportation infrastructure in Natick, and its connections to the surrounding system, can accommodate these existing and future work related trips.

The commuting patterns of people living or working in Middlesex County are shown in Maps 4.1 and 4.2. Map 4.1 shows the commuting patterns of 14,202 workers residing in Middlesex County and travelling to other counties in Massachusetts for work. Map 4.2 shows the commuting patterns of 27,094 workers working in Middlesex County and travelling from other counties in Massachusetts. The data for this map was sourced from American Community Survey 2006-2010 Tract to Tract Data.

WORKPLACE DESTINATION OF NATICK RESIDENTS	2014	
	Count	Share
County Subdivision		
Natick t (Middlesex, MA)	2,494	14.8%
Boston city (Suffolk, MA)	2,414	14.3%
Framingham town (Middlesex, MA)	1,305	7.7%
Newton city (Middlesex, MA)	994	5.9%
Wellesley town (Norfolk, MA)	833	4.9%
Waltham city (Middlesex, MA)	700	4.1%
Cambridge city (Middlesex, MA)	508	3.0%
Needham town (Norfolk, MA)	408	2.4%
Marlborough city (Middlesex, MA)	301	1.8%
Burlington town (Middlesex, MA)	277	1.6%
Worcester city (Worcester, MA)	255	1.5%
Westborough town (Worcester, MA)	254	1.5%
Watertown Town city (Middlesex, MA)	204	1.2%
Wayland town (Middlesex, MA)	190	1.1%
Lexington town (Middlesex, MA)	184	1.1%
Woburn city (Middlesex, MA)	160	0.9%
Sudbury town (Middlesex, MA)	155	0.9%
Dedham town (Norfolk, MA)	152	0.9%
Brookline town (Norfolk, MA)	150	0.9%
Weston town (Middlesex, MA)	149	0.9%
Hopkinton town (Middlesex, MA)	142	0.8%
Canton town (Norfolk, MA)	135	0.8%
Southborough town (Worcester, MA)	125	0.7%
Norwood town (Norfolk, MA)	124	0.7%
Quincy city (Norfolk, MA)	120	0.7%
All Other Locations	4,137	24.5%

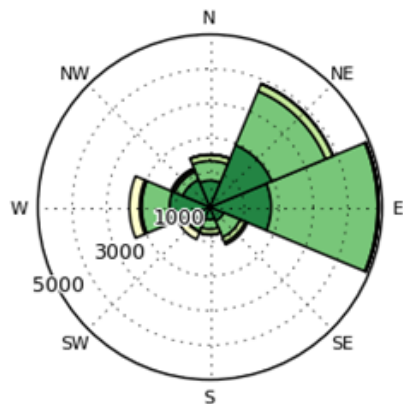


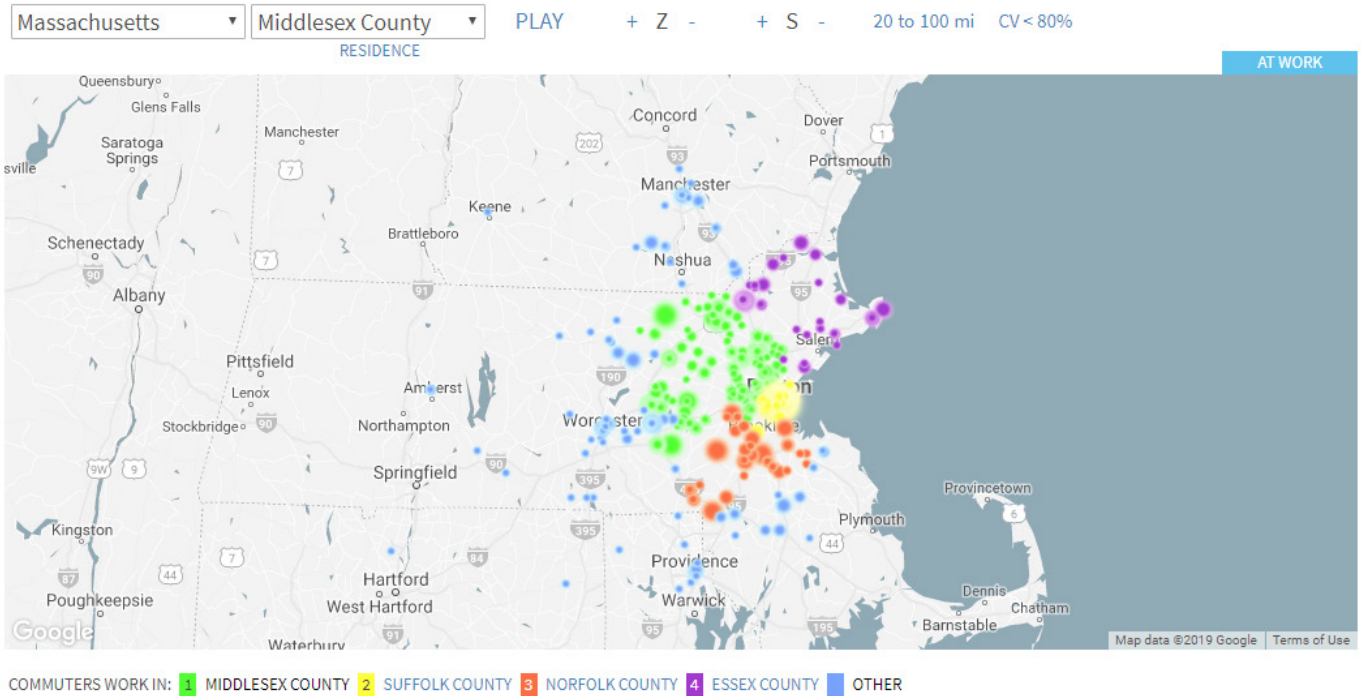
FIGURE 4.2. JOB COUNTS OF NATICK RESIDENTS BY DISTANCE AND WORK BLOCKS

Source: US Census OnTheMap for Natick

TABLE 4.2: TOP 25 WORKPLACE DESTINATIONS OF NATICK RESIDENTS

JOB COUNTS IN WORK BLOCK BY DISTANCE	2014	
	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	16,870	100.0%
Less than 10 miles	7,812	46.3%
10 to 24 miles	7,472	44.3%
25 to 50 miles	913	5.4%
Greater than 50 miles	673	4.0%

TABLE 4.3: JOBS BY DISTANCE/DIRECTION IN 2014

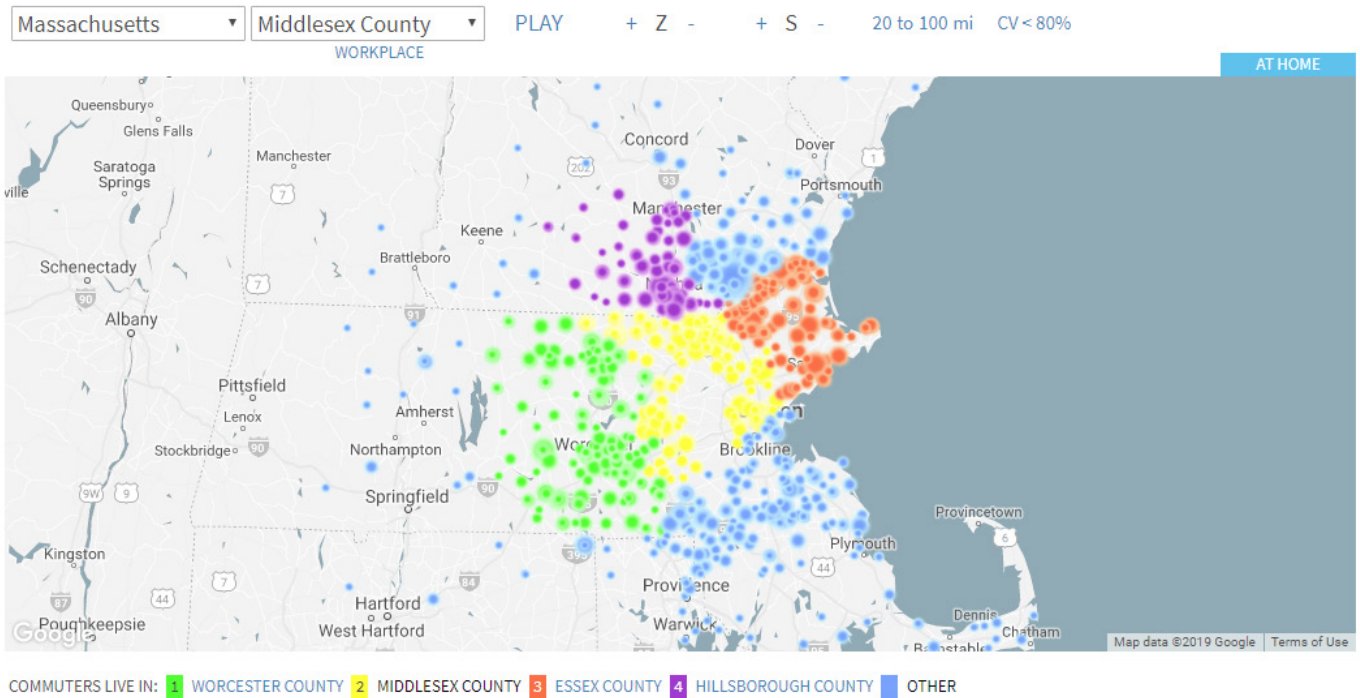


Commuter flows for workers who live in Middlesex County, Massachusetts in 174 unique census tracts, traveling between 20 miles and 100 miles, with CV < 80%.
 14,202 TOTAL ESTIMATED COMMUTERS ACROSS 540 INDIVIDUAL TRACT-TRACT FLOWS

MAP 4.1: COMMUTER FLOWS FOR WORKERS RESIDING IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND WORKING ELSEWHERE

Source:

<http://bigbytes.mobyus.com/commute.aspx?County=17&State=25&MinMiles=20&MaxMiles=100&MaxCoV=0.8&CountyType=home>



Commuter flows for workers who work in Middlesex County, Massachusetts in 191 unique census tracts, traveling between 20 miles and 100 miles, with CV < 80%.
 27,094 TOTAL ESTIMATED COMMUTERS ACROSS 1,124 INDIVIDUAL TRACT-TRACT FLOWS

MAP 4.2: COMMUTER FLOWS FOR WORKERS WORKING IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND RESIDING ELSEWHERE

Source: <http://bigbytes.mobyus.com/commute.aspx?County=17&State=25&MinMiles=20&MaxMiles=100&MaxCoV=0.8&CountyType=work>

Last accessed on: 02/08/2017

Private Development Projects and Impacts

In past years, Natick has seen significant land development. Private developers have collected significant data and executed numerous traffic studies throughout the town. Useful data and findings from these studies has been incorporated into this existing conditions review. This section summarizes the data from private developments as well as relevant transportation system improvements. The most relevant projects, with significant transportation system impacts and mitigation, are summarized below. A full listing of recent development projects is included in the appendix.

MathWorks Lakeside Campus Phase III, 3 Apple Hill Drive, Natick. This 2007 project entailed the expansion of the Mathworks Campus by an additional 142,519 square feet, which was expected to add approximately 1,380 new weekday daily vehicle trips to the roadway network, including 170 trips during the morning peak hour and 275 trips during the evening peak hour. Principal recommendations of this study included making Chestnut Street a dead end roadway with access from Beacon Street and improving pedestrian connectivity in the area by building a new sidewalk on Route 9 eastbound between eastern Apple Hill Drive Exit and Walnut Street. Most of the suggested safety enhancement recommendations have been completed during the course of this project, although some improvements have been incorporated into the Route 27 corridor project.

Parking Garage – MathWorks Lakeside Campus, 3 Apple Hill Drive Natick. This project, which was proposed in 2013, entails adding a 470-space parking garage to the existing 1,279 surface parking lot. Traffic analyses showed that the project would generate approximately 1,320 new trips on an average weekday, with 205 new trips during the weekday morning peak hour and 185 new trips during the weekday evening peak hour. In order to mitigate these impacts, the owner proposed intersection geometry improvements at Speen Street Northbound/ Superior Drive, as well as traffic signal timing improvements along the Speen Street corridor. The parking garage and recommended mitigation improvements are not complete, but are going to be implemented in the near future.

Lifetime Athletic Traffic Impact Assessment Study, 490 Old Connecticut Path, Framingham. This project entails the conversion of the Sealtest industrial site to a 137,971 square foot athletic center. The athletic center added an additional 125 trips during the PM peak hour compared to the industrial use. Mitigation recommendations are installing a new traffic signal at the intersection of Old Connecticut Path/Sealtest Drive to help manage queuing and minimize congestion; widening lanes at study intersections; upgrading signal equipment; updating traffic signal timings; and improving signal coordination at select intersections. The new traffic signal at the intersection of Old Connecticut Path/Sealtest Drive has been added, while the signal timing improvements and roadway geometric improvements are not yet complete. While not located in Natick, this project has been included because it impacts traffic within and around The Golden Triangle

Sherwood Plaza South Phased Master Plan Redevelopment, Route 9, Natick. This project is planned for phased construction: Phase I: 41,000 sf fitness facility; Phase II: multilevel parking garage, 151,000 sf office space and 25,000 sf of first floor retail space. Phase I is projected to result in a net reduction in peak hour vehicular trips when compared to the prior BJ's office use. At full build-out, the project is projected to generate approximately 92 to 192 new vehicle trips during the weekday peak hours. The Saturday midday peak hour trip increase is estimated to be approximately 178 new vehicle trips per hour. The developer committed to implementing a shared use path along the project site frontage, along with well-defined curb cuts to support traffic entering and exiting the site. Some of the roadway improvements have been initiated, but the parking garage has not been built and the sidewalks near the site that are slated for improvement have not yet been constructed.

AMC South Parking Lot Redevelopment at Shoppers World, Shoppers World Drive/Ring Road near Route 9, Framingham and Natick. The proposed redevelopment of the Shoppers World Plaza parking lot calls for construction of 276 apartment units, 4,500 sf specialty retail; and 4,000 sf of retail space. The project is updated from a previously approved 136 apartment development. The project mitigation includes intersection geometric and signal improvements to accommodate traffic from the development, as well as the traffic associated with the recently approved Wegmans Project at the Natick Mall. The redesigned project proposal is at a preliminary stage. It is unclear how the redesign will change the recommendations and the extent of improvements, although the travel demand and impacts are expected to be similar to those in the original proposal.

Town of Natick Roadway System

Natick is one of the fastest growing suburbs of Boston, and it is served by a robust network of highways, arterial roadways, and local streets, with numerous signalized and unsignalized intersections. Interstate 90/Massachusetts Turnpike (MassPike) borders Natick on the north, the intersection of Hartford Street and Bishop Street marks the western boundary, while Oak Street and South Street form the eastern and southern boundaries respectively. The following is a description of Natick’s major roadways and their characteristics.

Major Roadways

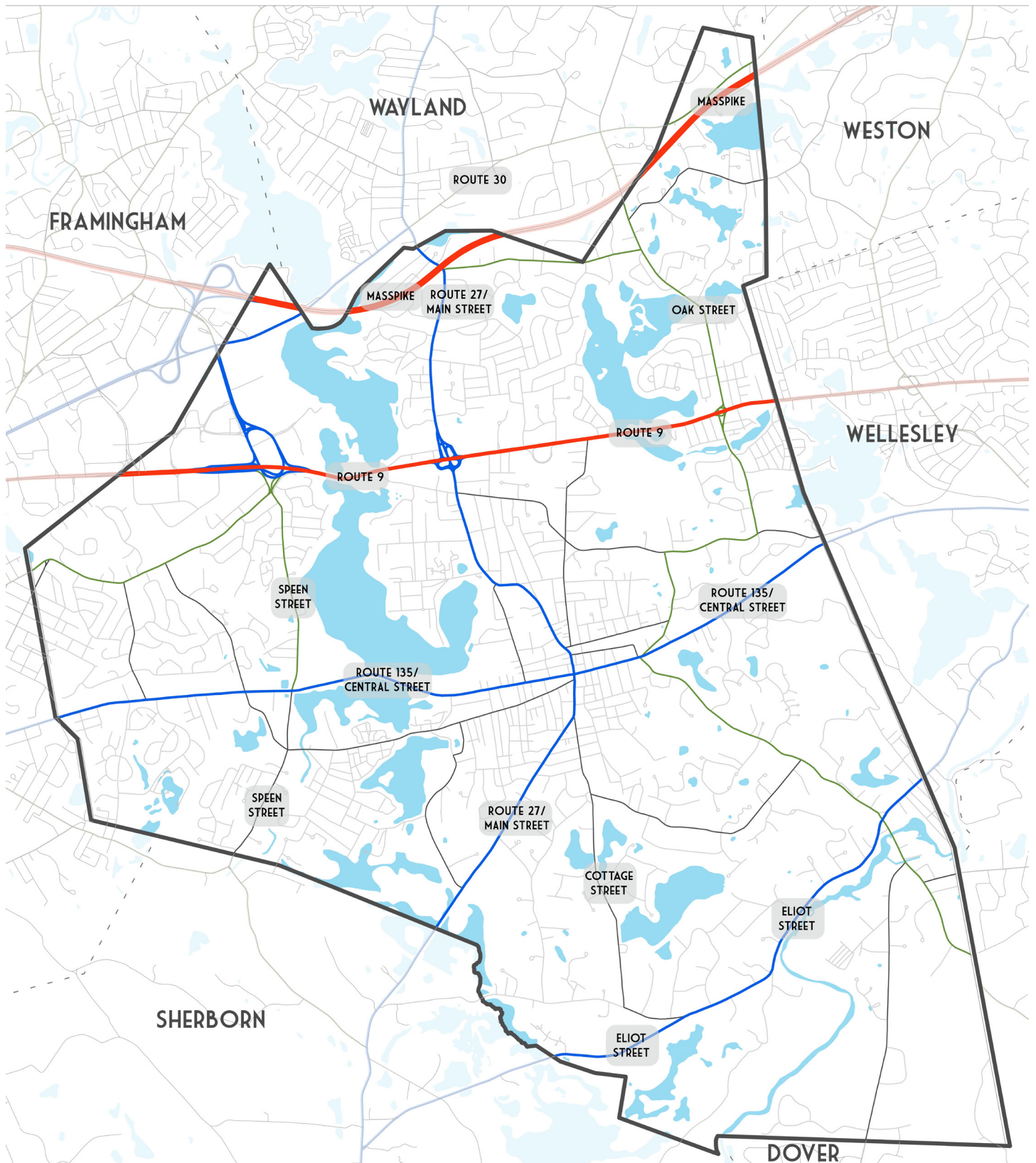
Five major state numbered routes run through Natick: I-90 (MassPike), Route 9 (Central Street), Route 135, Route 16, and Route 27 (Main Street). Of these, all but Route 27 have an east-west orientation, connecting the MetroWest region to the Boston metropolitan core. These roadways have different design characteristics and serve different volumes and types of traffic, as shown in Table 4.4. This section describes each route and its characteristics. As shown on Map 4.3, There are very few continuous north/south or east/west roads. The jurisdiction of various roadways in the Town is shown in Map 4.3.

Each major roadway is described in the following section.

ROADWAY	LOCATION	DAILY TRAF C VOLUME	COUNT YEAR
Interstate 90	East of Exit 13 (near Route 27)	122,700	2013
Route 9	Between Shoppers World Drive and Mall Road (near Natick Collection)	57,000	2010
	East of Route 27	54,900	1999
	East of Walnut Street	57,700	1989
Route 135	West of Speen Street	18,700	2001
	East of Route 27 (at Natick Center)	18,700	2003
	East of Union Street	10,400	2010
Route 16	East of Route 27	10,000	1995
	West of Union Street / Pleasant Street	11,200	2010
Route 27	South of Cottage Street	8,791	2015
	North of Everett Street	9,400	2014
	North of South Avenue	19,000	1991
	North of Route 9	19,500	2010
Speen Street	South of Route 30	36,200	2010

TABLE 4.4: AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES IN THE TOWN OF NATICK

Source: MassDOT Highway Division Traffic Count Database System
(rounded to nearest 100)



MAP 4.3: ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION MAP FOR THE TOWN OF NATICK

- Interstate
- Rural or Urban Principal Arterial
- Rural Minor Arterial or Urban Principal Arterial
- Urban Minor Arterial or Rural Major Collector
- Urban Collector or Rural Minor Collector
- Local
- Water

Interstate 90/ Massachusetts Turnpike

I-90/MassPike is the principal east-west highway in Massachusetts, and is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). It serves major commuter traffic flows to and from downtown Boston every day, along with intercity and interstate traffic connections. Running along the northern edge of Natick, I-90 is a fully access-controlled expressway that carries high traffic volumes. In and around Natick, I-90 has three lanes in each direction with wide left and right shoulders. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) in 2013 was 122,700 for both directions, while a volume count conducted by MassDOT in November 2016 showed an average volume of 133,376 in both directions, a finding that is consistent with rising statewide and national traffic volumes since 2013. Principal access to and from I-90 for Natick traffic is via Exit 13, located in Framingham just across the town line; the Natick Service Plaza is located east of Exit 13 and it services eastbound I-90 traffic.

Route 9

Route 9, also known as Worcester Street and Ted Williams Highway in Natick, is an important east-west state highway that provides connections between MetroWest and the Boston inner core, as well as among MetroWest communities and to the Natick Mall and Shoppers World in the retail zone referred to collectively as The Golden Triangle. Route 9 also carries heavy traffic volumes and provides connections to very few arterials. It runs parallel to I-90, and some travelers use it as an alternative route. In Natick, Route 9 primarily comprises two 11-12-foot lanes, with left turn lanes at major intersections, along with right-turn lanes at some locations. Route 9 has partial access control at two interchanges:

- + A complex system of ramps provides access to and from Speen Street (which also provides connections to retail destinations and I-90; collector-distributor roads in this location provide access to these ramps, as well as to the Natick Mall and Sherwood Plaza (West Natick).
- + A very compact cloverleaf interchange at Route 27 (north of Natick Center).

The balance of Route 9 through Natick is not limited access. It is a major retail artery; east of The Golden Triangle, it is lined with principally smaller-scale retail fronted by parking lots, with closely-spaced curb cuts and poor access control in some locations. As seen in Table 4.4, significant traffic volumes are carried by Route 9. Route 9 is also under MassDOT jurisdiction.

Route 135

Route 135, also known as Central Street, is an east-west state-numbered highway under shared Town of Natick and MassDOT jurisdiction. The Town of Natick has jurisdiction and maintenance responsibility for Route 135 in Natick Center, between Cemetery Street and Union Street/Marion Street, while MassDOT has jurisdiction to the east and west of this segment. Route 135 is an important mixed-use corridor that provides east – west connectivity through Natick, and carries a substantial amount of traffic as shown in Table 4.4. Most of Route 135 in Natick is residential, although Natick Center is dominated by civic and public spaces as well as small-scale retail, while Route 135 in West Natick has commercial strip development and the West Natick MBTA Station. Route 135 consists of an approximately 12-foot wide single lane in each direction separated by a double yellow centerline, with turn lanes at major intersections, parking in Natick Center, and shoulders of varying widths.

Major intersections include Mill Street and Speen Street in West Natick, and Route 27 and Union Street/Marion Street in Natick Center.

Route 16

Route 16 is a state-numbered highway under Town of Natick jurisdiction. It is oriented generally southwest – northeast and consists of a single lane in each direction separated by a double yellow line. Lane widths range from 10 feet to 12 feet. The intersection with Route 27 is one of the major junctions of Route 16, which passes through South Natick. In 2010, the AADT on Route 16 West of Union Street/Pleasant Street was 11,200 vehicles per day. Land use along Route 16 is primarily residential, with some local retail uses near major crossroads.

Route 27/Main Street

Route 27, also referred to as Main Street, runs north – south through the center of Town and is a numbered highway under the jurisdiction of the Town of Natick. It mostly consists of a single 12-foot lane in each direction separated by a double yellow centerline, with turning lanes at major crossroads. Route 27 is known as North Main Street north of Route 135 and South Main Street to the south of Route 135. The junction of Route 9 is a major interchange along Route 27. According to 2010 data, North Main Street had an AADT of 19,500 vehicles per day just north of Route 9; AADT was 8,791 vehicles per day on South Main Street close to Cottage Street in 2015. Land use is principally residential for most of the corridor, with small-scale retail in Natick Center.

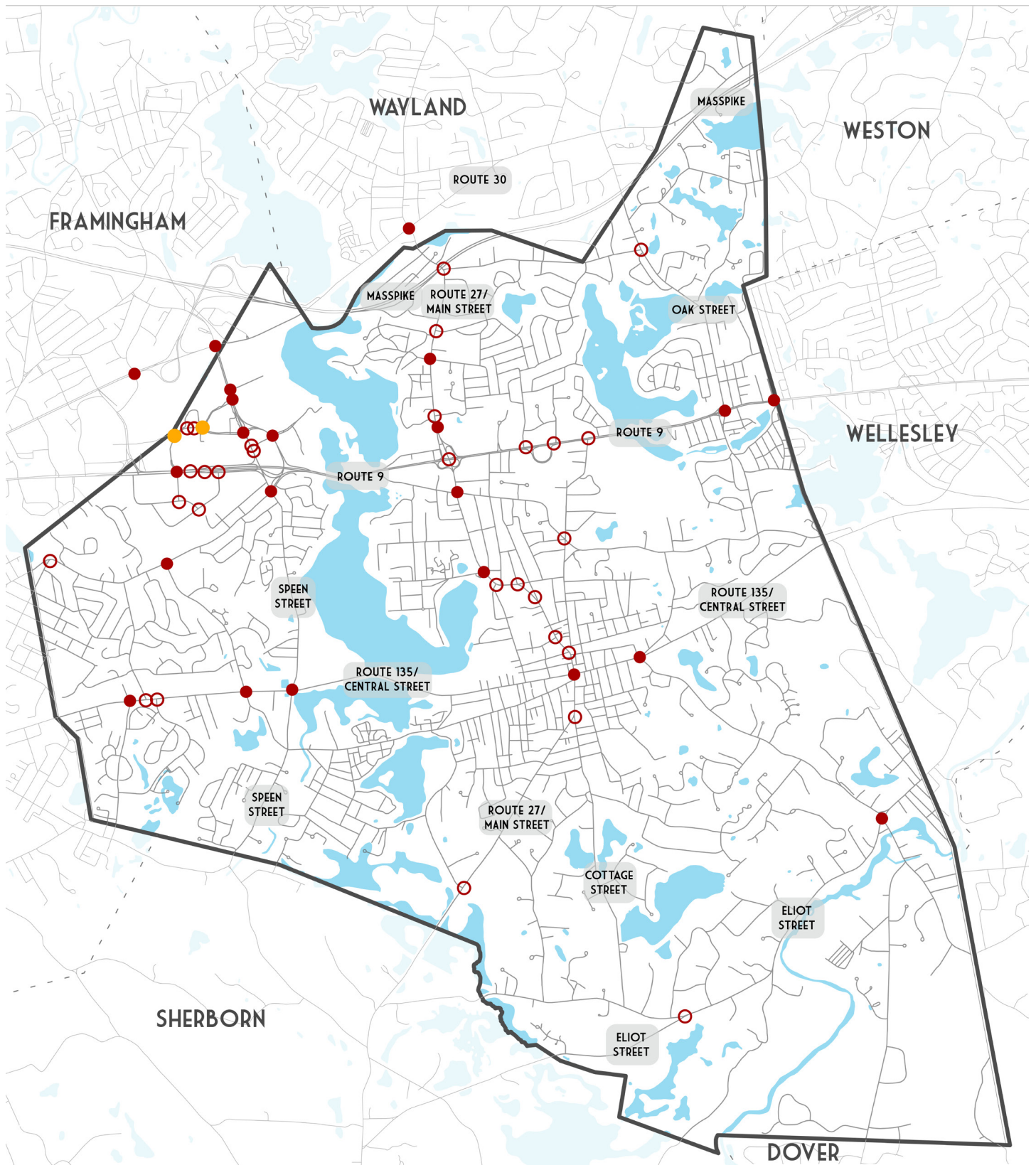
Speen Street

Speen Street is a major collector road located in West Natick. It runs north – south and consists of a single lane in each direction, separated by a double yellow line in most sections, with 11 to 12-foot lanes. Turning lanes are provided at major intersections. At the Route 9 interchange and to the north, Speen Street widens to two or three lanes in each direction. As seen in Table 4.4, it carried average daily traffic of 36,200 vehicles in 2010. Speen Street provides access to I-90 and Route 9 via an interchange. It also provides access to large malls and shopping centers, such as the Natick Mall, Shoppers World, Cloverleaf Marketplace, Crowne Plaza, and Sherwood Plaza.

Study Area Intersections

The geographic limits of the Town of Natick and the study area intersections analyzed are shown in Map 4.4. Major signalized intersections, unsignalized intersections and roundabouts were inventoried. Traffic volume counts were conducted in November 2016, and supplemented with previously collected traffic data from other sources, including transportation studies and design efforts conducted for public agencies, as well as Traffic Impact and Access Studies (TIAS) analyses conducted for private developers.

Upon consultation with Town of Natick officials, 52 intersections were selected for level of service analysis. Of these, 22 intersections were signalized, 28 were unsignalized (two-way stop controlled or all-way stop controlled) and two were roundabouts. This section summarizes the existing traffic volumes and conditions at these locations. Detailed descriptions of the intersection designs and operating characteristics are included in the Transportation Appendix.



MAP 4.4: INTERSECTIONS ANALYZED IN THE TOWN OF NATICK

- Signalized Intersections
- Unsignalized Intersections
- Roundabouts
- Water

Existing Traffic Volumes

Several traffic impact studies were obtained from the Town and the consultants that performed these studies. The studies ranged from the year 2007 to 2016. Turning Movement Counts (TMC) and Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) volumes that were usable were adopted from these studies. For the intersections with traffic counts that were either old or non-existent, new traffic counts were conducted to supplement the existing information. TMCs for sixteen (16) intersections were obtained on Thursday, November 10, 2016:

New TMCs were conducted at the following intersections:

- + Pine Street @ Oak Street
- + North Main Street @ Pine Street
- + North Main Street @ Evergreen Road
- + North Main Street @ General Greene Avenue
- + North Main Street @ Middlesex Avenue/South Avenue
- + South Main Street @ Cottage Street
- + Route 9 @ Oak Street
- + Route 9 @ Walnut Street
- + Walnut Street @ Bacon Street
- + Route 135 @ Kendall Lane
- + Route 135 @ Boden Lane
- + Route 135 @ Newfield Drive
- + Elliot Street @ Everett Street
- + Hartford Street @ Bishop Street
- + Mill Street @ Hartford Street
- + West Street @ Route 27

New 72-hour ATR counts were also conducted at two locations:

- + Route 27 south of Route 9 eastbound ramps from November 10, 2016 through November 12, 2016.
- + Route 135 east of Washington Avenue from November 17, 2016 through November 19, 2016.

The newly obtained TMCs and ATRs are included in the Appendix. Daily traffic volumes obtained at various locations are summarized in Table 4.5.

LOCATION	YEAR	WEEKDAY ADT ¹	AM PEAK HOUR VOL.	PM5 PEAK HOUR VOL.	SAT. ADT ¹	SAT. ² PEAK HOUR VOL.
		vpd	vph	vph	vpd	vph
Old Connecticut Path, West of Speen Street	2013	8,900	710	930	6,200	540
Dean Road, South of Route 9	2013	8,540	480	785	9,965	945
Natick Mall Road between JC Penny Garage Driveways	2015	7,500	290	680	10,100	940
Shoppers World Drive, South of Burr Street Ext.	2016	11,800	535	1035		
Flutie Pass, East of AMC South Parking Lot	2016	7,900	270	735		
Route 27, south of Route 9 EB Ramps	2016	22,781	1,626	1,660	21,640	1,597
Route 135, east of Washington Ave.	2016	10,104	641	766	9,085	728

TABLE 4.5: EXISTING TRAFFIC VOLUMES

vpd = vehicles per day

vph = vehicles per hour

1 Daily traffic expressed in vehicles per day

2 Peak hour volume expressed in vehicles per hour

Seasonal Variation and Background Traffic Growth

Supplemental counts at sixteen intersections were collected in November, 2016. Upon review of MassDOT published historic traffic data, November traffic counts are higher than average month conditions. However, to be conservative, the newly-collected traffic volumes were not reduced to reflect average month conditions. Traffic volumes from previous studies were generally adjusted for seasonal variation.

A review of the background growth rate used by the previous studies was conducted. The growth rates ranged from 0.5 percent to 1.5 percent, although the growth rates were mainly toward the lower end of this range. Based on the assumptions used in other studies reviewed and upon consultation with the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), the staff to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, a general background growth rate of 0.5% per year was adopted. Seasonally adjusted traffic volumes obtained from previous studies were adjusted to represent 2016 base year existing volumes. Where appropriate, traffic volumes were balanced between the intersections.

The 2016 AM and PM peak hour weekday turning movement volumes are shown in the Appendix. The AM peak period ranges from 7 AM to 9 AM and the PM peak period ranges from 4 PM to 6 PM. A local, intersection-specific peak hour was used at each intersection, so the peak hour may vary from intersection to intersection.

Peak Hour Operating Conditions

The traffic operations of the study area intersections were analyzed using methodologies from the 2010 Highway Capacity Manual (HCM). Level of Service (LOS) and delays were calculated and are summarized below. Synchro 9TM software was used as the analysis tool for determining the LOS at the study area intersections. Synchro implements the methods specified in the 2010 HCM to analyze intersection capacity and determine LOS.

LOS is an index that is intended to reflect a traveler's experience on different types of transportation facilities. LOS ranges from A (free flow, unconstrained travel) to F (severe congestion, long delays), and it serves as an indicator of driver discomfort, frustration, fuel consumption, and lost time. For operations at intersections, which are the controlling factor for Natick's local roadway system, LOS is based on the HCM-based calculation of "control delay," which is the average amount of time that a vehicle will spend stopped at a given intersection or intersection approach. Control delay values for different LOS are shown in Table 4.6.

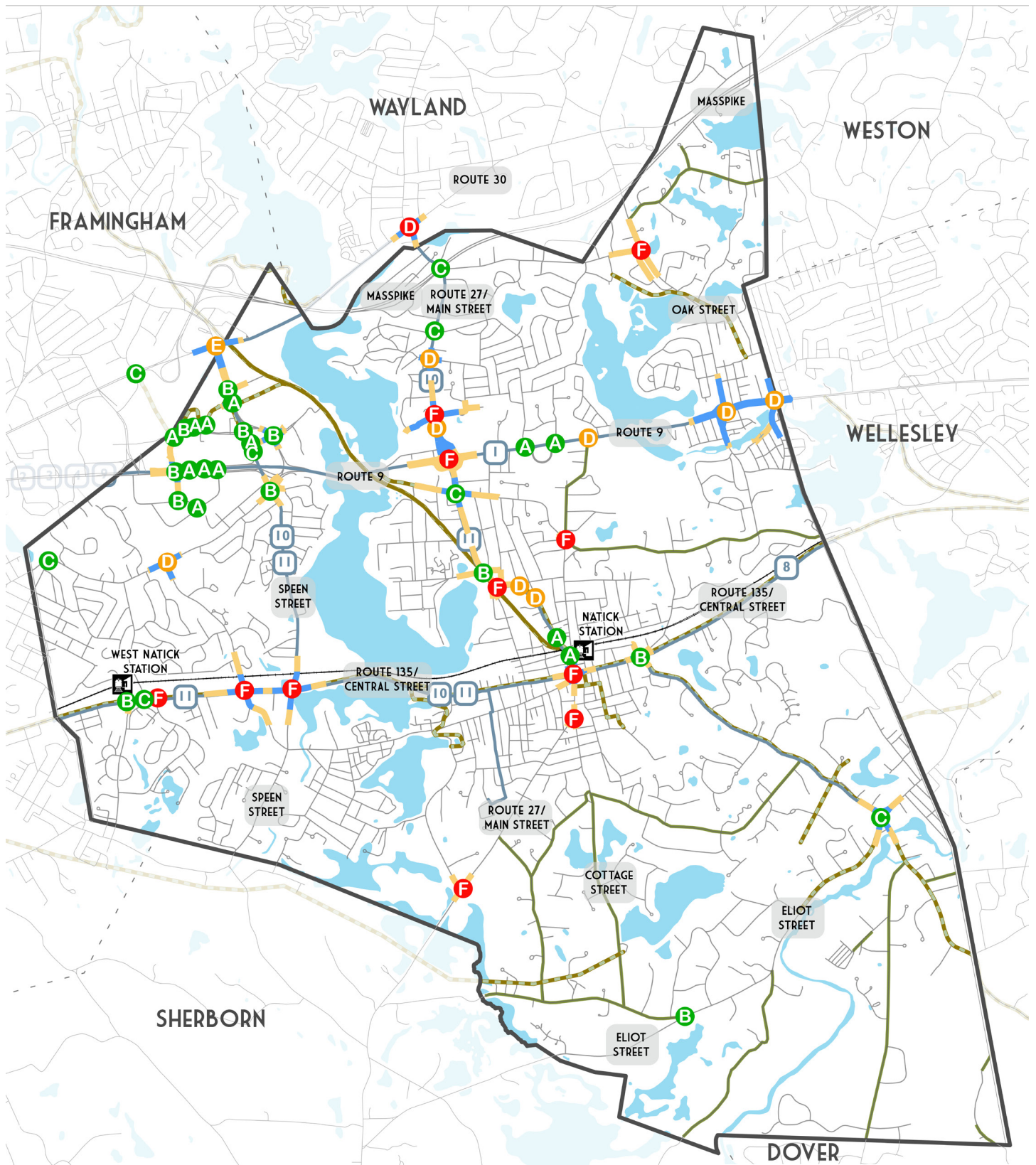
Signalized intersection analysis is based upon the capacity of each lane group and the correlating control delay associated with the intersection. Capacity is a measurement of the ability of an intersection design to accommodate all movements within the intersection. Capacity is a function of physical geometry and signalization conditions.

Level of Service	AVERAGE DELAY (SECONDS)	
	Signalized Intersections	Unsignalized Intersections
A	<= 10	<= 10
B	> 10 and <= 20	> 10 and <= 15
C	> 20 and <= 35	> 15 and <= 25
D	> 35 and <= 55	> 25 and <= 35
E	> 55 and <= 80	> 35 and <= 50
F	> 80	> 50

TABLE 4.6: EXISTING TRAFFIC DELAYS

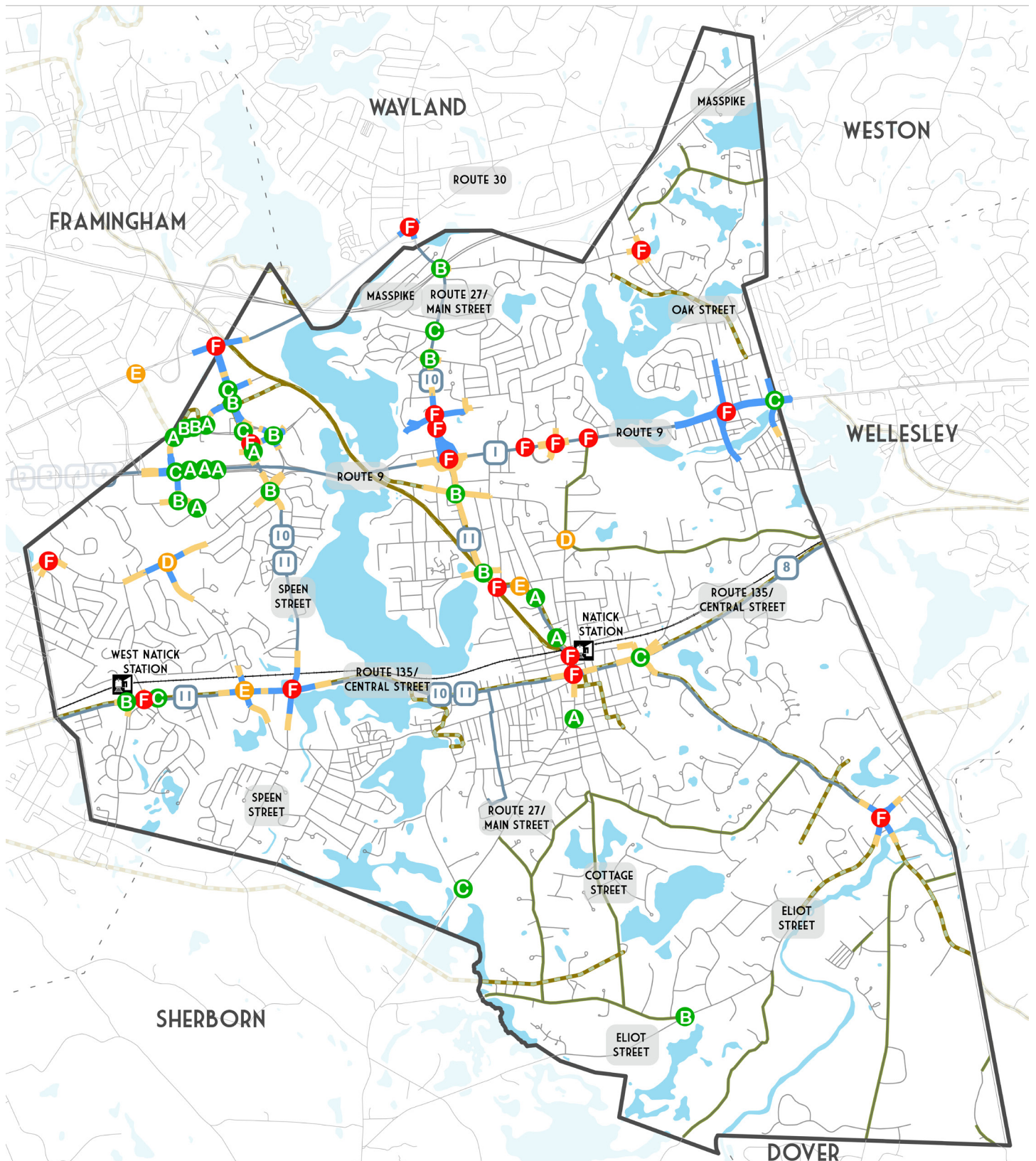
Key intersection Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs), including LOS and projected queuing, are shown in Table 4.7 and Map 4.5 for the AM peak hour and Table 4.8 and Map 4.6 for PM peak hour. During the AM peak, three out of 22 signalized intersections operated at LOS F, with high levels of delay, congestion and queuing, while seven of the 28 unsignalized intersections operated at LOS E or worse. Similarly, during the PM peak seven of the 22 signalized intersections operated at LOS F and nine of the unsignalized intersections operated at LOS E or worse. The signalized intersections with a LOS F are highlighted in the table. The maps also show the average queue length at each study intersection approach, along with the "worst case" queue; this "worst case" is the 95th percentile queue, or queues that would be expected to occur roughly 5 percent of the time.

The intersections with high levels of congestion are largely concentrated on roadways that connect through Natick, where traffic tends to be concentrated. These key congested routes include Route 27, Route 135, and Route 9.



MAP 4.5: AM PEAK INTERSECTION LOS AND TYPICAL QUEUING

- ● ● Intersection Level of Service
- ~ Average Queue
- ~ "Worst Case" Queue
- MBTA Stations
- MBTA Commuter Rail
- Bus Routes
- Bike Lanes
- Shared Use Path



MAP 4.6: PM PEAK INTERSECTION LOS AND TYPICAL QUEUING

- ● ● Intersection Level of Service
- ~ Average Queue
- ~ "Worst Case" Queue
- MBTA Stations
- MBTA Commuter Rail
- Bus Routes
- Bike Lanes
- Shared Use Path

INTERSECTION NAME	INT. TYPE	INT. LOS	50 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	95 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	INT. DELAY
Route 9 @ Apple Hill Drive Enter	U	A			0
Route 9 @ Apple Hill Drive Exit	U	A			0
Route 9 @ Walnut Street	U	D		42	
Route 9 @ Oak Street	S	D	~895	#1033	89.1
Route 9 @ Overbrook Drive	S	D	~1043	#1249	75.8
Route 27 @ Route 30	S	D	~373	#576	97.2
Route 27 @ Pine Street	U	C		48	19.6
PINE STREET @ OAK STREET	U	F		900	482.6
Route 27 @ Westlake Road	U	C		2	18.3
Route 27 @ East Evergreen Road	S	D	~317	317	107.4
ROUTE 27 @ RUTLEDGE ROAD	U	F		46	136.6
Route 27@ Stop N Shop Site	S	D	~739	#1306	63.1
Route 27@ Bacon Street	S	C	410	#1169	112.5
WALNUT STREET/CHESTNUT STREET @ BACON STREET	U	F		230	175.8
Route 27@ Kansas Street (General Greene Ave)	S	B	222	#756	38.1
ROUTE 27@ LAKE STREET	U	F		406	723
Route 27 @ Kinsman Place/Grove Street	U	D		14	32
Route 27 @ Charles Street	U	D		8	33.1
Route 27 @ Cochituate Street	U	A			
Route 27 @ Middlesex Avenue/South Avenue	U	A			
ROUTE 27 @ ROUTE 135	S	F	~278	#607	200.4
SOUTH MAIN STREET @ COTTAGE STREET	U	F		340	73.6
ROUTE 27 @ WEST STREET	U	F		450	394
Route 16 @ Union Street/Pleasant Street	S	C	338	#800	44
Route 135 @ Marion Street/Union Street	S	B	182	#397	27.7
Route 16 @ Everett Street	U	B		20	11.3
ROUTE 135 @ SPEEN STREET	S	F	~534	#956	249.4
ROUTE 135 @ MILL STREET	S	F	488	#1126	265.9
ROUTE 135 @ NEWFIELD DRIVE	U	F		208	87.2
Route 135 @ Boden Lane	U	C			21.7

TABLE 4.7: 2016 EXISTING AM PEAK HOUR MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

S = Signalized Intersection

U = Unsignalized Intersection

R = Roundabout

m - Volume for 95th percentile queue is metered by an upstream signal

= 95th percentile volume exceeds capacity. Queue may be longer.

INTERSECTION NAME	INT. TYPE	INT. LOS	50 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	95 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	INT. DELAY
Route 135 @ Kendall Lane	S	B	150	353	22
Burr Street @ Cochituate Road	S	C	255	#596	276.9
Speen Street @ Cochituate Road	S	E	~648	#797	112.9
Speen Street SB @ Storage Driveway/Chrysler Road	S	B	192	#527	67.5
Speen Street @ Nouvelle Way/Retail Driveway	S	A	303	170	41.5
Mall Road @ Flutie Pass	R	A			4.5
Access Road/Flutie Pass @ JC Penny Garage	U	B		2	10.9
Flutie Pass@ JC Penny Garage East Drive	U	A			9.9
Service Drive/Nouvelle Way @ Flutie Pass/Natick Mall Rd	R	A		20	5.5
Speen Street NB/Natick Mall Road @ Speen Street SB	S	B	154	m124	44.4
Speen Street @ Superior Drive	U	A		22	2.3
Speen Street NB @ Superior Drive/Prime Parkway	S	B	298	411	35.8
Speen Street SB/ Speen Street @ Natick Mall	U	C		8	21.5
Dean Road/Natick Mall Road @ Route 9	S	B	305	#757	80.8
Sherwood Plaza Driveway & Route 9/Route 9 EB	U	A		2	9.8
Route 9 EB @ Route 9 WB	U	A			
Strathmore Road @ Route 9 EB	U	A	4	10.3	10.3
Mercer Road @ Dean Road	U	B		16	10.2
Strathmore Road @ Mercer Road	U	A		9.6	10
Speen St SB @ Hartford Street/Speen St NB & Route 9	S	B	221	#481	41.6
Hartford Street @ Bishop Street	U	C		92	18.7
Mill Street @ Hartford Street	S	D	472	515	70.1

TABLE 4.7: 2016 EXISTING AM PEAK HOUR MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS (CONTINUED)

S = Signalized Intersection

U = Unsignalized Intersection

R = Roundabout

m - Volume for 95th percentile queue is metered by an upstream signal

= 95th percentile volume exceeds capacity. Queue may be longer.

INTERSECTION NAME	INT. TYPE	INT. LOS	50 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	95 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	INT. DELAY
ROUTE 9 @ APPLE HILL DRIVE ENTER	U	F	0	195	350.8
ROUTE 9 @ APPLE HILL DRIVE EXIT	U	F	0	427	708.3
ROUTE 9 @ WALNUT STREET	U	F	0	75	20.6
ROUTE 9 @ OAK STREET	S	F	1430	m#1409	273.3
Route 9 @ Overbrook Drive	S	C	724	#1006	31
ROUTE 27 @ ROUTE 30	S	F	344	#534	89.3
Route 27 @ Pine Street	U	B	0	206	13.8
PINE STREET @ OAK STREET	U	F	0	404	227.9
Route 27 @ Westlake Road	U	C	0	0	0
Route 27 @ East Evergreen Road	S	B	74	298	11.4
ROUTE 27 @ RUTLEDGE ROAD	U	F	0	273	110.1
ROUTE 27 @ STOP N SHOP SITE	S	F	880	#1122	218.3
Route 27 @ Bacon Street	S	B	201	#921	15.6
Walnut Street/Chestnut Street @ Bacon Street	U	D	0		25.2
Route 27 @ Kansas Street (General Greene Ave)	S	B	175	630	15.5
ROUTE 27 @ LAKE STREET	U	F	0	215	345.9
Route 27 @ Kinsman Place/Grove Street	U	E	0	22	38
Route 27 @ Charles Street	U	A	0	0	0
Route 27 @ Cochituate Street	U	A	0	0	0
ROUTE 27 @ MIDDLESEX AVENUE/SOUTH AVENUE	U	F	0	0	0
ROUTE 27 @ ROUTE 135	S	F	252	#642	111
South Main Street @ Cottage Street	U	A	0	0	0
Route 27 @ West Street	U	C	0	47	23.1
ROUTE 16 @ UNION STREET/PLEASANT STREET	S	F	485	#770	172.9
Route 135 @ Marion Street/Union Street	S	C	152	#672	20.6
Eliott Street @ Everett Street	U	B	0	93	11.1
ROUTE 135 @ SPEEN STREET	S	F	646	#1100	140.2
Route 135 @ Mill Street	S	E	429	#741	75.8
Route 135 @ New Field Drive	U	C	0	49	24.9
ROUTE 135 @ BODEN LANE	U	F	0	286	69.5

TABLE 4.8. 2016 EXISTING PM PEAK HOUR MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

S = Signalized Intersection

U = Unsignalized Intersection

R = Roundabout

m - Volume for 95th percentile queue is metered by an upstream signal

= 95th percentile volume exceeds capacity. Queue may be longer.

INTERSECTION NAME	INT. TYPE	INT. LOS	50 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	95 TH PERCENTILE QUEUE	INT. DELAY
Route 135 @ Kendall Lane	S	B	130	423	17.5
Burr Street @ Cochituate Road	S	E	662	#801	73.6
SPEEN STREET @ COCHITUATE ROAD	S	F	759	#961	101
Speen Street SB @ Storage Driveway/Chrysler Road	S	C	375	491	27.1
Speen Street @ Nouvelle Way/Retail Driveway	S	B	647	#740	19.7
Mall Road @ Flutie Pass	R	A	0	0	0
Access Road/Flutie Pass @ JC Penny Garage	U	B	0	6	10.9
Flutie Pass@ JC Penny Garage East Drive	U	B	0	9	12.5
Speen Street @ Superior Drive	U	A	0	5	0.4
Service Drive/Nouvelle Way @ Flutie Pass/Natick Mall Rd	R	A	0	0	0
Speen Street NB/Natick Mall Road @ Speen Street SB	S	C	190	#256	31.2
Speen Street NB @ Superior Drive/Prime Parkway	S	B	314	418	18.7
SPEEN STREET SB/ SPEEN STREET @ NATICK MALL	U	F	0	363	396
Dean Road/Natick Mall Road @ Route 9	S	C	526	#996	25.2
Sherwood Plaza Driveway & Route 9/Route 9 EB	U	A	0	19	0.6
Route 9 EB @ Route 9 WB	U	A	0	0	0
Strathmore Road @ Route 9 EB	U	A	0	32	1.9
Mercer Road @ Dean Road	U	B	0	19	10.4
Strathmore Road @ Mercer Road	U	A	0	7	9.8
Speen St SB @ Hartford Street/Speen St NB & Route 9	S	B	209	#582	16.7
HARTFORD STREET @ BISHOP STREET	U	F	0	510	302
Mill Street @ Hartford Street	S	D	577	#1270	45

TABLE 4.8. 2016 EXISTING PM PEAK HOUR MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS (CONTINUED)

S = Signalized Intersection

U = Unsignalized Intersection

R = Roundabout

m - Volume for 95th percentile queue is metered by an upstream signal

= 95th percentile volume exceeds capacity. Queue may be longer.

Safety Analysis and High Crash Locations

Traffic crash records and patterns were reviewed to identify existing roadway safety issues in Natick. MassDOT data and analysis, including the most recent “Top Crash Locations Report” and “Top High Crash Intersection Locations” tool was used to identify the high traffic crash locations in Natick. Table 4.9 shows the locations in Natick that are eligible for federal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding, which serves as an indicator of where the crash data records indicate a crash cluster or potential safety issue. HSIP funding may be used at such locations to implement improvements that address identified safety issues.

Table 4.9 summarizes a number of key safety-related measures at these crash cluster locations for the three year period 2012 – 2014, including total crashes, fatalities, injuries, and crash rate based on level of traffic volume to enable some comparison of intersections with varying levels of traffic. Natick is located in MassDOT District 3, which has an average crash rate for signalized intersections of 0.90 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled (MVMT) and 0.65 crashes per MVMT for unsignalized intersections. Crashes at unsignalized intersections in Natick are generally lower than the District 3 average in most cases. However, signalized intersections with identified crash clusters generally have a higher rate of crashes than the District 3 average.

Three intersections (highlighted in Table 4.9) in Natick were ranked among the top 200 crash intersection locations in Massachusetts between the years 2012 and 2014. All of these crash clusters are located at signalized intersections. The intersection of Route 135 @ Speen Street was ranked 144, the intersection of Speen Street NB @ Superior Drive/Prime Parkway was ranked 158, and Route 9 @ Dean Road/Natick Mall Road was ranked 164.

Any potential improvements at these locations should include review of crash data, evaluation of safety issues, and consideration of safety “countermeasures,” or improvements with a proven record of addressing safety problems. Potential safety countermeasures include all-way stop control, traffic signal timing adjustments, sight line improvements, installation of roundabouts, narrowing of travel lanes and other “traffic calming” measures, and implementation of Complete Streets design improvements. Intersections near residential areas and village centers, which tend to have higher pedestrian and bicycle volumes, are high priority locations for providing Complete Streets accommodations. Intersections along Route 27, Route 135, and Route 30 would be appropriate for such treatments.

Unsignalized intersections with crash clusters that are operating with high levels of delay and congestion, especially those operating at LOS F, should be reviewed. Drivers at these locations may experience high levels of frustration that can lead to riskier behaviors, such as substandard gap acceptance. Review topics may include the potential for all-way stop control, roundabouts, or signal warrant analyses to assess the suitability of installing traffic signals, which can improve traffic safety in certain circumstances.

CRASH CLUSTER LOCATION	CRASH COUNT	FATALITIES	INJURIES	PROPERTY DAMAGE ONLY	CRASH RATE
Route 9 @ Route 27 east of intersection	101	0	9	92	1.74
Route 9 @ Route 27 west of intersection	87	0	7	80	1.50
ROUTE 9 @ DEAN ROAD/NATICK MALL ROAD	69	0	8	61	1.08
SPEEN ST. NB @ SUPERIOR DR./PRIME PARKWAY	66	0	9	57	1.89
ROUTE 135 @ SPEEN STREET	54	0	13	41	1.76
Route 9 @ Oak Street	51	0	3	48	0.87
Route 9 @ Route 27 north of intersection	46	0	6	40	1.39
Route 9 west of Maine Avenue	43	0	5	38	0.60
Speen Street @ Superior Drive/Natick Mall	36	0	3	33	1.51
Interstate 90 east of Oak Street	34	0	7	27	0.25
Route 9 @ Overbrook Drive	33	0	7	26	0.64
Route 135 @ Park Street/Washington Street	32	0	4	28	N/A
Route 135 @ Mill Street	30	0	6	24	1.30
Speen St. Ramp to Route 9 EB/Route 9 WB	30	0	3	27	N/A
Interstate 90 east of Indian Rock Road	29	0	4	25	0.21
Interstate 90 east of Route 27	28	0	6	22	0.21
Route 27 @ Route 30	27	0	5	22	0.98
Route 9 Ramp to Speen Street SB	27	0	4	23	N/A
Route 9 @ Walnut Street	25	0	4	21	0.39

TABLE 4.9. EXISTING CRASH INFORMATION

Roadway, Intersection, and Traffic Issues and Opportunities

The following issues have been identified through field observations, evaluation of traffic operations, review of previous planning documents (both private development analyses and publicly-funded studies), input from Town of Natick representatives, and comments from stakeholders and members of the public.

General Roadway Network Issues

- + As shown on Map 3.4, there are many physical barriers created by Natick's geography, including its many lakes and its infrastructure - limited access facilities like I-90/MassPike, Route 9, and the Boston Mainline railroad. These barriers tend to funnel traffic onto the relatively limited number of roadways that provide access to and across these barriers, such as Route 135, Route 27, Speen Street, and Oak Street. As a result, these roadways tend to experience higher levels of traffic, congestion, and crashes.
- + Natick has experienced significant growth and development in recent years. This is true of the retail centers and corridors, including The Golden Triangle and Route 9, as well as the more historic residential neighborhoods and mixed-use districts throughout the rest of the Town.
- + Based on U.S. Census data, the municipalities of Framingham and Wellesley that border Natick had a population increase of about two percent and five percent, respectively, from the year 2000 to 2010. Nearby Towns of Medfield and Holliston had a decreasing trend in population.
- + Cordon counts obtained from MassDOT's Transportation Data Management System indicate that a majority of trips from Natick are eastbound toward Boston. Traffic coming into Natick from the south is mostly on Route 27, while most traffic from the east travels on Route 135 and Route 9 from Wellesley. Traffic from the north enters Natick via Route 27 and Route 30. Traffic from the west enters the Town via I-90 and Route 135, Route 126, and Route 16.

Corridor Related Issues

Route 27

- + Route 27 is a major north - south route through Natick, and it carries heavy traffic volumes and experiences significant congestion.
- + Poor access management in some segments of Route 27, principally the sections just north of Route 135 and north of Route 9, creates conflicts with through-traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Route 9

- + Heavy commuter traffic volumes result in congestion and queuing.
- + Substandard acceleration and deceleration lengths, ramp geometry, and ramp widths create operational and safety issues.
- + Inadequate spacing between merge and diverge lanes lead to weaving of traffic.

Route 135

- + Frequent curb cuts result in poor access management and vehicular conflicts in West Natick.
- + High traffic volumes and constrained intersections result in significant congestion and queuing at major intersections.

Speen Street

- + Access to I-90/MassPike and Route 9 ramps attracts heavy traffic, resulting in congestion and queuing in spite of wide roadways and intersections.
- + This concentration of traffic is exacerbated by a lack of parallel north-south roadways in West Natick.

Issues at Intersections

Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Chestnut Street

- + This is a complex five-way intersection with awkward skewed angles.
- + Chestnut Street access could be evaluated and intersection approach angles could be reviewed to develop a more conventional intersection design.
- + On the Bacon Street westbound approach, a second stop line and center line indicate that westbound left turning vehicles are allowed to split from through traffic and turn left from the other side of opposing traffic. To improve safety and minimize driver confusion, the secondary left turn lane could be eliminated and the pavement could be replaced with a raised channelizing island, which would continue to allow the Walnut Street northbound right turns. By constructing this island, the Walnut Street northbound Stop-line could also be moved closer to the intersection.

Dean Road/Natick Mall Road/Route 9

- + The existing traffic signal system is outdated, and results in inefficient operations, congestion, and queuing.
- + The benefits of an adaptive traffic signal control system could be evaluated for the potential to ease congestion at this intersection. This could potentially improve safety and reduce driver confusion.

Speen Street/Cochituate Road

- + Ramp access to the I-90/MassPike attracts heavy traffic and results in congestion and queuing, in spite of multiple lanes and wide intersection approaches.
- + Difficult access onto and off of the MassPike interchange ramps creates weaving conflicts, which are exacerbated by frequent curb cuts and poor access management along Cochituate Road.

Route 27/ Route 135

- + This Natick Center intersection is a major focal point for community activity, as well as for the Town's traffic, resulting in congestion and queuing.
- + The yellow clearance intervals for all movements except the Main Street southbound left-turn movement do not meet the MUTCD and MassDOT minimum requirements. The all-red clearances for the East Central Street westbound and Main Street southbound left-turn phases do not meet the MUTCD and MassDOT minimum requirements. The yellow clearance intervals should be increased to 4 seconds, except for the Main Street southbound left-turn movement. The all-red clearance interval should increase to 2 seconds for the East Central Street westbound left-turn movement and the Main Street southbound left-turn movement.

Route 27/Bacon Street

- + During the evening peak, queues extend on the Route 27 southbound approach to Bacon Street and generally reach the bridge and beyond. This queue blocks the Route 27 ramp to Route 9 eastbound.
- + The queue also blocks the Route 9 eastbound ramp to Route 27 southbound, creating queue spill back onto Route 9.

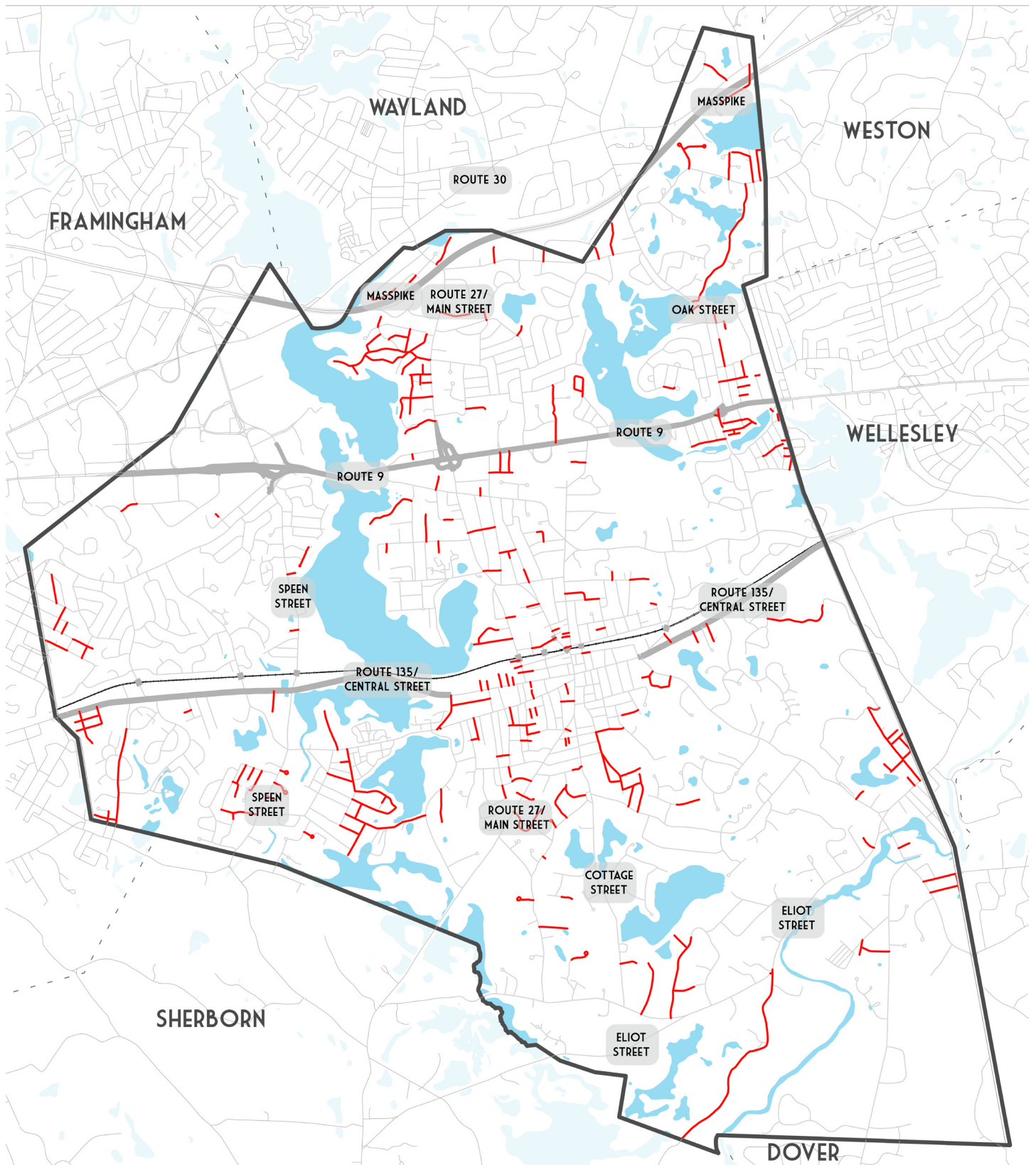
Route 27/ Route 9

- + The Route 27/Route 9 interchange has significant geometric and operational issues:
 - o Vertical sight distance issues
 - o Substandard speed transition distance
 - o Poor sight distance at merge and diverge points
 - o Poor entrance and exit ramp terminal design
 - o Limited distances between on and off-ramps, which creates weaving problems
- + Weaving traffic results in a significant number of crashes in and around the interchange.
- + Tight ramp geometries make it difficult for larger vehicles to negotiate the ramps, resulting in congestion and safety concerns.






- + Due to the heavy Route 9 eastbound traffic during the commuting peak periods, the Route 27 northbound ramp to Route 9 eastbound experiences significant operational issues. Queues spill back to Route 27, which complicates sight distance issues on the Route 27 ramp to Route 9 related to the sub-standard ramp radius configuration.

Unaccepted Roadways

Many local roads are not accepted by the Town of Natick; these are shown in red on Map 4.7. These roads do not have access to public funding for reconstruction and maintenance; as a result, they are commonly in poor repair, and could create safety and access issues for drivers that use them. The Master Plan process should consider the need and utility of certain high-priority connections, and evaluate the potential for the Town's acceptance of these high-priority unaccepted road segments.



MAP 4.7. UNACCEPTED ROADWAYS IN NATICK

-  Massachusetts Department of Transportation
-  Town Accepted Road
-  Road Not Accepted
-  MBTA Commuter Rail
-  Water

Transit

Public transportation in the study area is provided by the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) for local bus service and by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) for regional commuter rail.

MBTA

The MBTA serves the Natick area via the Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail Line, running from South Station (Boston) to Framingham and Worcester. The line also serves the towns of Ashland, Auburndale, West Natick, Southborough, Wellesley Square, Wellesley Hills, Wellesley Farms, Westborough, West Newton, and Newtonville. The Town of Natick has two MBTA commuter rail stops: West Natick and Natick Center. Trains run every 30 to 35 minutes during the peak periods.

Table 4.10 provides general information about the two MBTA stations.

STATION	NATICK CENTER	WEST NATICK
Owner	Town of Natick	MBTA
ADA Accessible?	No	Yes
Parking Spaces	71	178
Accessible Spaces	4	4
Bicycle Spaces	12	23
Parking Fee (2019)	Town Permit Required. Annual Fee = \$825 (resident), \$1200 (non-resident)	Annual Fee = \$1260

TABLE 4.10. MBTA STATION CHARACTERISTICS

Table 4.11 shows that Natick-based ridership on the Framingham/Worcester commuter rail line increased significantly (roughly 60 percent) between 2010 and 2013. This is likely due in part to the recovering economy and increased employment in Massachusetts. It is also attributable to significant increases in train service, frequency, and capacity on the Framingham/Worcester line. In 2009, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts purchased the Boston Mainline between Worcester and Boston, which carries the Framingham/Worcester commuter rail service. Purchase of this line provided the MBTA with greater scheduling and operational control. At the same time, CSX relocated its principal freight rail operations from Beacon Park Yard in Allston Landing to improved facilities in Worcester and Westborough, significantly reducing freight traffic on the line. This has enabled the MBTA to increase commuter rail frequency on the line by about 60 percent, from 12.5 weekday round trips to 20. The MBTA also hopes to improve service and on-time performance on the line through further improvements in the vicinity of the former Beacon Park Yard, including double-tracking of a remaining single-track bottleneck.

The Natick Center Accessibility Project Study was completed in the year 2014 and is funded in the MassDOT 2017-2021 Capital Investment Plan (CIP). The project aims to support current and projected transit ridership in the Town of Natick by providing an upgraded MBTA commuter rail station that integrates universal access in accor-

dance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A reconstructed Natick Center Station will also provide enhanced access for all modes of travel; facilitate efficient rail operations, and support community and economic development in the heart of Natick Center.

STATION	NATICK		WEST NATICK		COLLECTION MONTH	BLUE BOOK YEAR
Year	IN Boarding	Ranking	IN Boarding	Ranking		
2013	1,077	15th	1,121	12th	April	2014
2012	809		904		November	2014
2011	796		945		November	2014
2010	675		884		November	2014
2009	700		1,016		February	2014
2008	783		1,032		February	2014
2007	830		1,094		June	2014
2006	799	24th	1,067	13th	February	2010
2005	699		857		February	2010
2004	728		841		February	2010
2003	723		1,018		February	2010
2002	1,214		1,456		February	2007
2001	960		1,210		February	2007

TABLE 4.11. TYPICAL WEEKDAY INBOUND BOARDING

MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)

There are currently eight MWRTA bus routes – Routes 1, 2, 3, 4N, 8, 9, 10, and 11 – that serve at least some portion of Natick. These routes in turn provide connections to additional MBTA bus routes and the commuter rail system. These routes are shown on Map 4.8, and summarized in Table 4.12. Most of the MWRTA bus routes serving Natick begin and end their service at the MWRTA Blandin Hub on Blandin Avenue near Framingham Center. Routes 2, 3, 4N, and 9 provide only limited Natick service, to Natick Mall on the western edge of town via Route 9; Route 8 provides only limited Natick service, to the Natick Community-Senior Center on the eastern edge of Natick Center via Route 135.

Metro West Transportation Management Association

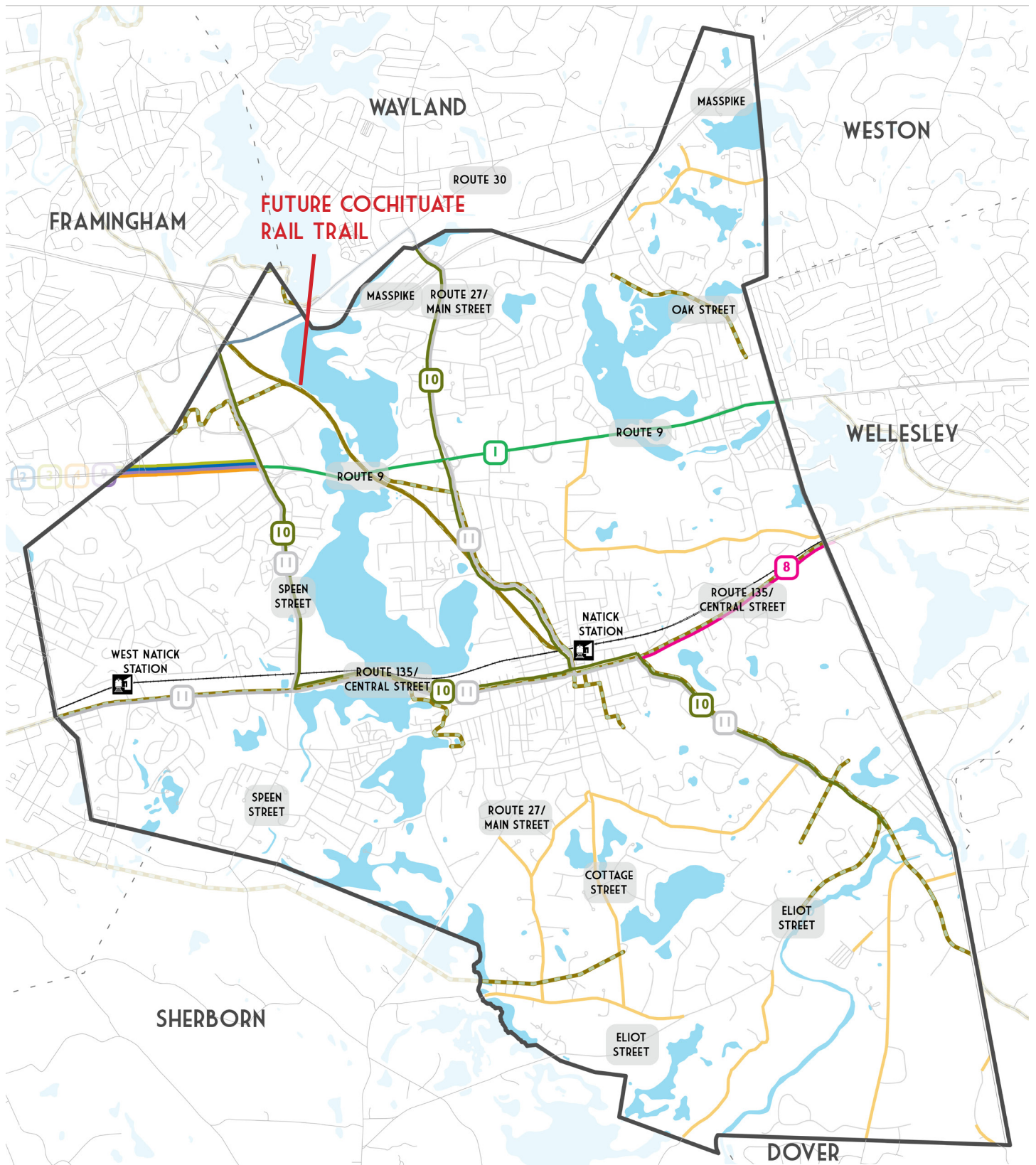
The MetroWest/495 Transportation Management Association (MWTMA) is a member-based non-profit organization that focuses on transportation-related issues in the MetroWest region and provides sustainable commuting solutions to the large employers located there. The MWTMA is a joint program of the MetroWest and Marlborough Regional Chambers of Commerce, and it also partners with the 495/MetroWest Partnership, Metro West Regional Transit Authority and MassCommute.

MWTMA serves the communities of the MetroWest region (Framingham, Natick, Marlborough, Hudson, Southborough, Ashland, Sudbury, Wayland, Holliston, Hopkinton, Sherborn, Westborough, and Northborough) including those located along Interstate 495. The MWTMA advocates the use of alternate modes of transportation, including carpooling, vanpooling, public transit, walking, and bicycling. The goal of the MWTMA is to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and increase awareness of sustainable transportation. The MWTMA also advocates for sustainable transportation options in the area and collaborates with community leaders to strengthen the economic growth and quality of life for the MetroWest area. MWTMA members include many major employers in the region; Natick member employers include MathWorks and the Natick Soldier Systems Center.








ROUTE	START	PRINCIPAL ROUTE	CONNECTIONS	TERMINUS	APPROXIMATE WEEKDAY FREQUENCY
1	Blandin Hub	Route 9	Natick Mall	Woodland MBTA Station	20 minutes
2	Downtown Framingham	Loop - Route 126	Natick Mall Framingham State University	Downtown Framingham	60-75 minutes
3	Downtown Framingham	Loop - Route 126	Natick Mall Framingham State University	Downtown Framingham	65-75 minutes
4N	Blandin Hub	Loop - Bishop St. - Hartford St. - Route 126	Natick Mall MW Medical Center	Blandin Hub	60 minutes
8	Natick Community Center	Route 135	Wellesley College Wellesley MBTA Commuter Rail Wellesley Hills Commuter Rail	Woodland MBTA Station	90 minutes
9	Mass Pike Exit 12	Route 9	Natick Mall Framingham State University	Natick Mall	20-40 minutes
10	Blandin Hub	Loop - Route 135 - Route 27 - Route 30 - Speen St.	Downtown Natick Natick Center MBTA Commuter Rail Natick Mall	Blandin Hub	95 minutes
11	Blandin Hub	Loop - Route 135 - Route 27 - Route 30 - Speen St. - Route 135	Downtown Natick Natick Center MBTA Commuter Rail West Natick MBTA Commuter Rail Natick Mall	Blandin Hub	95 minutes

TABLE 4.12. METROWEST REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY BUS ROUTES

Multimodal transportation facilities for Natick are shown in Map 4.8.



MAP 4.8. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION IN NATICK

-  MBTA Stations
-  MBTA Commuter Rail
-  Bus Routes
-  Bike Lanes
-  Shared Use Path
-  Scenic Road
-  Water

Public Transportation Issues

- + MBTA commuter rail service frequency has increased in recent years, but travel time and reliability on the Framingham/Worcester line are issues.
- + Natick Center MBTA station has substandard facilities and access, although the planned Natick Center Station Improvement Project (explained in the Public Capital Investment Projects section) is intended to address these issues, and make the station ADA compliant.
- + MWRTA bus routes are generally infrequent. While Route 1 and Route 9 have headways of approximately 20 minutes, most other routes serving Natick have headways of an hour or more. Many of the MWRTA routes also have very infrequent service off peak and on weekends, or cease service altogether.
- + Aside from the MWRTA bus routes, last-mile connections to and from such destinations as Natick Center and the MBTA stations are lacking for residents without cars.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations

Map 4.8 shows the existing bicycle accommodations in Natick, while Map 4.9 shows the sidewalk coverage in Natick.

Members of the public, Town of Natick representatives, and other stakeholders have expressed a strong desire to make Natick a more pedestrian and bike friendly town. The following are key issues and priorities that have been identified.

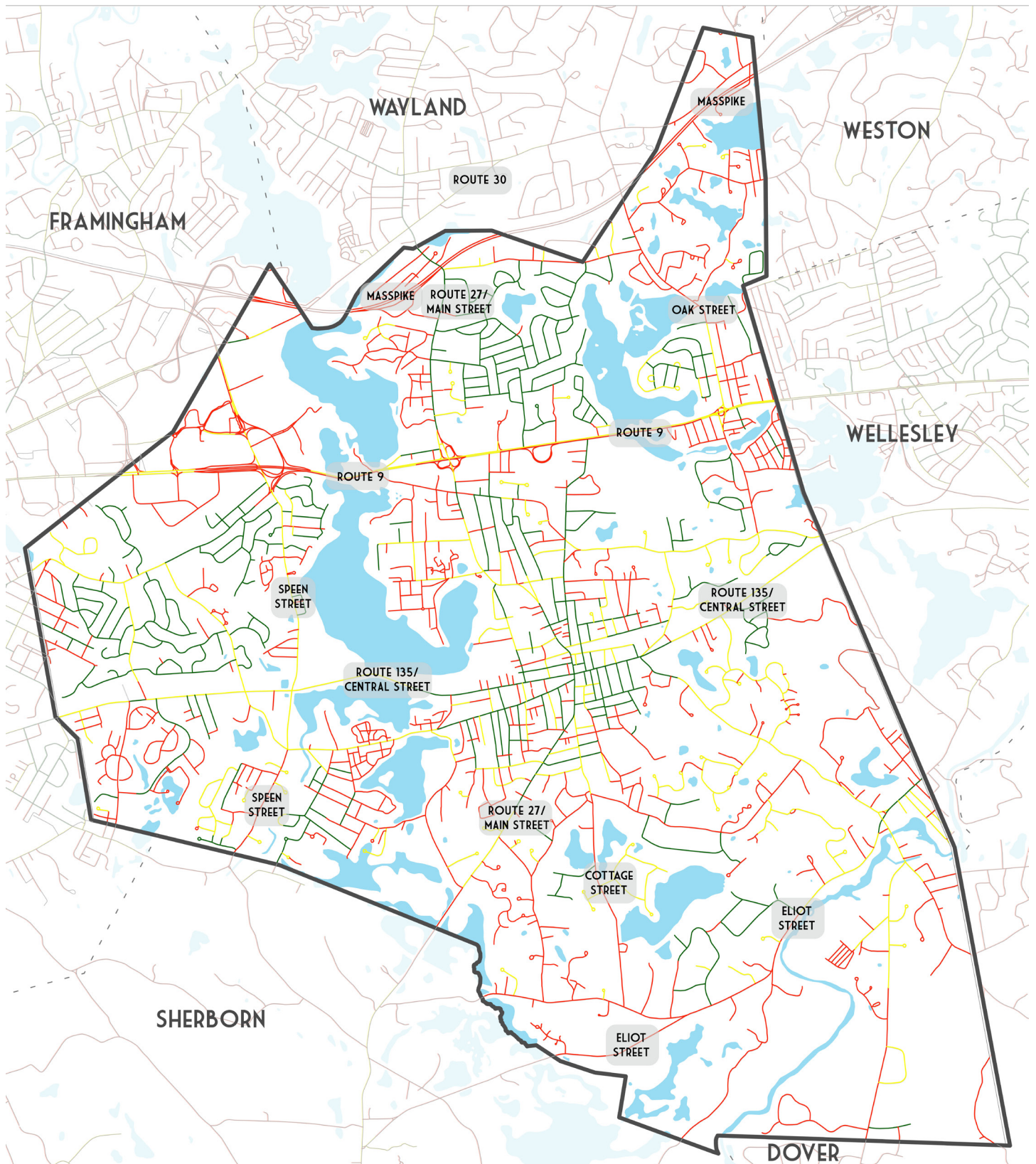
Pedestrian and Bicycle Issues

General Pedestrian Issues

- + Sidewalk coverage and pedestrian access in Natick are inconsistent.
- + There is comprehensive sidewalk coverage in Natick Center and some other older residential neighborhoods.
- + Outside of these areas, sidewalks are limited to one side of the street or are missing altogether, discouraging walking and limiting recreational opportunities.
- + ADA facilities (e.g. curb cut ramps) are missing from many older sidewalks.

General Bicycle Issues

- + Bicycle facilities are lacking in Natick.
- + The only marked bicycle facilities in Natick are bicycle lanes approximately one mile long on Oak Street, generally between Route 9 and the Wayland Town Line.
- + Due to the lack of connectivity of minor roadways across barriers such as Route 9, the Boston Mainline railroad, and Natick's lakes, bicycle trips of any distance generally require travel on Natick's high-traffic arterial roadways, such as Route 27 or Route 135.
- + Although Route 135 has bikeable shoulders on much of its length in Natick, these shoulders are of inconsistent width and connectivity; as a result, they are not marked as bike lanes.
- + The planned Cochituate Rail Trail (summarized in the Public Capital Investment Projects section) will significantly improve bicycle access between Natick Center and the northwestern quadrant of the town; however, a more robust network of on- and off-street bicycle facilities is needed to improve bicycle access for the whole of Natick.
- + Covered bicycle parking at the MBTA stations would encourage more bicycle access to commuter rail.



MAP 4.9. SIDEWALK COVERAGE IN NATICK

- Both Sides
- One Side
- None

Corridor Pedestrian and Bicycle Issues

Route 9

- + The south-side pedestrian sidewalk ends at a bus-bay area located just west of the Route 27 bridge on Route 9. There are abandoned stairways which lead to Route 27 located on the westerly side of both bridge abutments.
- + It was noted during the field visit that there is poor visibility at the crosswalk located on the North Main Street (Route 27) southbound to Route 9 eastbound ramp near North Main Street (Route 27).

Route 27

- + The sidewalk conditions at numerous locations on Route 27 are poor and in most cases wheelchair ramps and crosswalks do not meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. At some intersections wheelchair ramps exist but are substandard. At other locations there are marked crosswalks but no wheelchair ramps.
- + No bicycle accommodation is provided under the existing interchange configuration. Currently Route 27 is a difficult route for bike use due to lack of bicycle accommodations, lack of bicycle detection and signage, and heavy vehicular traffic.

Route 135

- + There are frequent curb cuts and poor access management in West Natick.
- + Mixed residential and commercial land use generate significant pedestrian traffic.
- + There are inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities in some locations.

Middlesex Avenue

- + Sidewalks are present on the south side of the street with no buffer zones.
- + No bike accommodations are provided.

Washington Avenue

- + Sidewalks and bike facilities are uneven or absent.
- + Pedestrian signage, curb ramps and detectable warning panels are absent.

Bacon Street

- + There are uneven or absent sidewalk and bike facilities to the west of Stillwater Circle.
- + Pedestrian signage, curb ramps and detectable warning panels are absent.
- + Crosswalk markings are substandard, poorly located, or missing.

Cottage Street

- + Cottage Street is an important walking route that connects Natick Center to neighborhoods to the south and is also the site of the Tobin School.
- + There is a sidewalk on the west side of the street between South Main Street and Farwell Street/Woodland Street.
- + The Town of Natick is getting ready to undertake a capital improvement project to extend the sidewalk on the west side of the street from the current terminus to the end of the street at Everett Street.

Speen Street

- + Multiple lanes, wide roadways, and ramp interfaces create an uncomfortable pedestrian and bicycle environment.
- + There are no bicycle facilities, and heavy volumes of relatively high-speed traffic create difficult bicycling conditions.

Intersection Pedestrian and Bicycle Issues

Route 27 / Route 135

- + There is good pedestrian infrastructure and comprehensive sidewalk coverage at this intersection, and through most of Natick Center.
- + Despite this, there are wide crossings, especially on the northern leg of the intersection, due to the head-in parking.
- + MassDOT's "Top Crash Locations" tool was used to analyze bicycle and pedestrian crash clusters in Natick. From 2005 to 2014, no bicycle-related crashes were reported in Natick. However, a major pedestrian crash cluster was observed in Natick Center near the intersection of Route 27 / Route 135. Twelve crashes were recorded, with all twelve crashes causing an injury.

Speen Street/Cochituate Road

- + Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are provided along parts of Route 30, but traffic volumes and speeds are high, and crossings are wide.
- + Alternate treatments for the crossing of the proposed Cochituate Rail Trail across Route 30 should be reviewed to enhance safety and attractiveness of the trail.
- + Poor access management and difficult access onto and off of the I-90/ MassPike Exit 13 interchange ramps.

Route 27/Bacon Street

- + Wheelchair ramps at the intersection do not meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

- + It was noted during a field visit by VHB that pedestrian signal heads on the northwest and southeast corners have been hit and turned, and are no longer properly aligned.

Route 27/ Stop & Shop Site

- + A crosswalk is located across North Main Street (Route 27) on the northern side of the intersection, but there are no wheelchair accessible ramps.
- + The MathWorks Campus Phase III traffic study noted that some of the loop detectors in the pavement are exposed.

Route 135 / Kendall Lane

- + Sidewalks are missing from the northern part of Route 135 west of the intersection.
- + Sidewalks on the western side of Kendall Lane end approximately 30 feet south of the intersection.
- + Tactile pads are missing on the southwest and northeastern corners of the intersection.
- + Pedestrian crossings are missing from the eastbound approach of Route 135 at the intersection.

Pine Street / Oak Street

- + There are no sidewalks along Pine Street, and no crosswalks at this intersection.

Route 27/ Lake Street

- + Sidewalks are missing from the western side of Lake Street and northern side of Route 27 at the intersection.
- + Crosswalks are absent from the Route 27 approach of the intersection.



January 2016

DOWNTOWN NATICK METER & PERMIT ZONES

PARKING METER & KIOSK TIMES	
\$0.25 each 15 Min.	\$0.25 each 1 Hour
\$0.25 each 30 Min.	\$0.25 each 1 Hour
Meter & Kiosk Hours: 9 AM - 5 PM MON-SAT Free Parking ALL other times including Sunday	

PARKING PERMIT ZONES	
Town Vehicle	Town Employee
Downtown Business	Commuter Lot
Permit Parking Hours: 7 AM - 5 PM MON-FRI Free Parking ALL other times including Sat & Sun	



Kiosk Locations

C.O.A. Permit Allows FREE 2 Hour Parking in Meter & Kiosk Spaces ONLY



FIGURE 4.3. MAP OF DOWNTOWN NATICK METER & PERMIT ZONES

Parking

On-Street Parking

The Town of Natick Transportation and Parking webpage, publishes a map of Natick Center Parking as shown in Figure 4.3.

On Route 135:

From the Route 135 intersection with Kendall Street to the intersection with Maple Street there is no street parking. From the intersection with Maple Street to the intersection with Washington Street there is parking on the southern side of Route 135. From the intersection with Washington Street to the intersection with Lincoln Street at Hayes Street there is parking on both sides of Route 135. From the intersection with Lincoln Street and Hayes Street to east of the intersection with Marion and Union Street there is no parking on Route 135.

On Route 9:

From the intersection with Dean Road to the intersection with Overbrook Drive there is no street parking on Route 9.

On Route 16:

North of the intersection with Union Street and Pleasant Street and south of the intersection with Union there is parking on the east side of Route 16. South of the intersection with Union Street and Pleasant Street and north of the intersection with Mill Lane there is parking on both sides of Route 16.

On Route 27:

From the intersection with Route 135 to the intersection with South Avenue, there is angled parking along both sides of Route 27, with parking meters. From the intersection with South Avenue to the intersection with Route 30 there is no on-street parking.

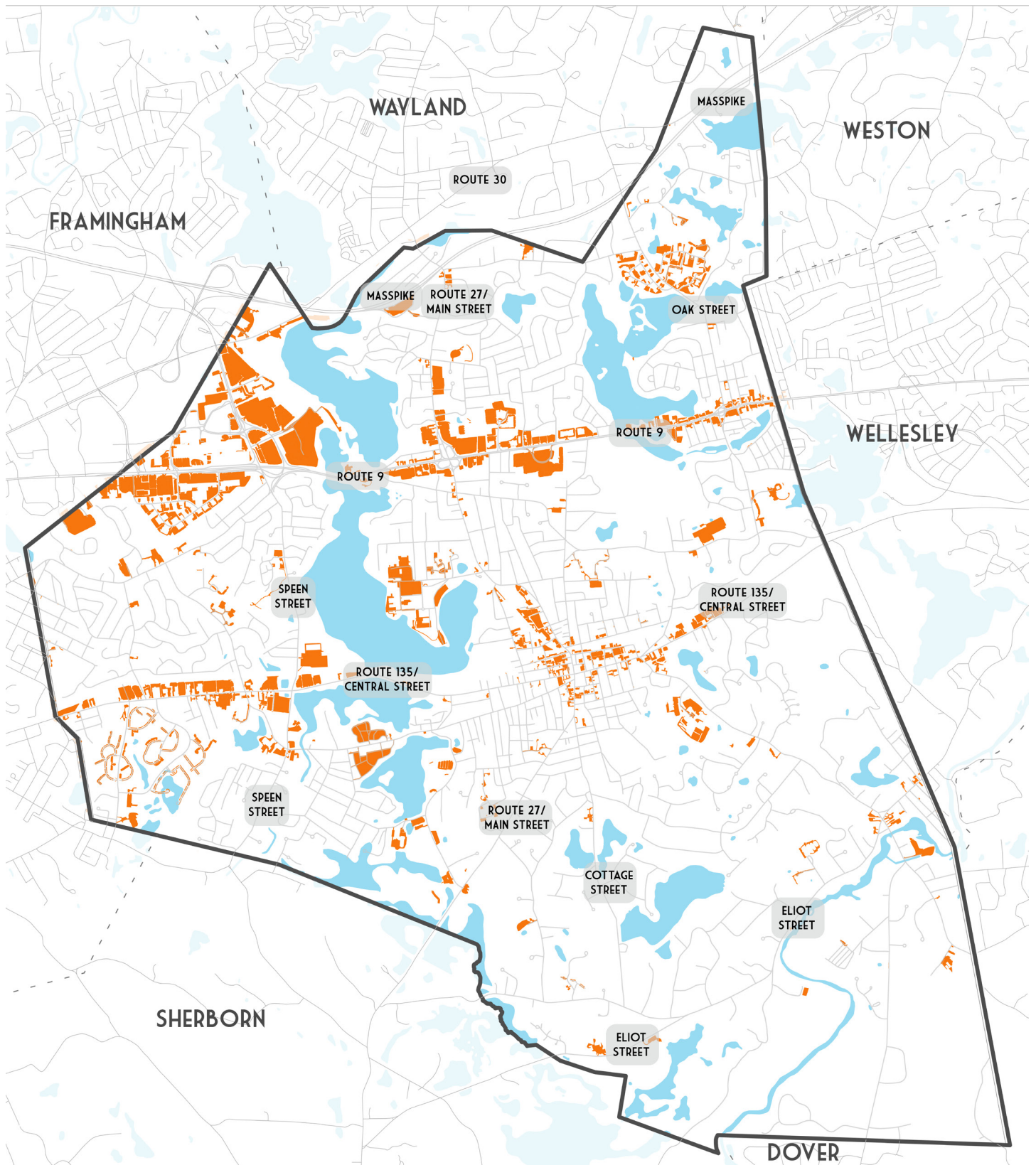
Metered on-street parking in Natick Center is also available on Park Street, Common Street, South Main Street, Pond Street, Summer Street, Middlesex Avenue, North Avenue, South Avenue, Court Street, Washington Street, and Hayes Street. Other Natick Center roads have permit parking for downtown business employees, Town of Natick employees, and Town-owned vehicles.

Off-Street Parking

All off-street parking in Natick is as shown in Map 4.10. The total area of off-street parking is 529 acres, or 5.2 percent of the total area of Natick. Approximately 171 acres are in the shopping centers area in northwest Natick. Off-street parking facilities are also distributed in commercial areas along Route 135, Route 9 and Oak Street, the Soldier Systems Center and Natick Center.

Parking Issues

- + Lack of parking near Natick Center is frequently cited as an issue by residents and visitors.
- + Review of parking demand and occupancy indicates that the most pressing parking issue is a lack of long-term weekday parking, in particular parking around the Natick Center MBTA commuter rail station.
- + The Town of Natick is investigating the potential for structured parking in Natick Center, with a preference for private investment.



MAP 4.10. NATICK OFF-STREET PARKING AREAS

Off-street Parking Area

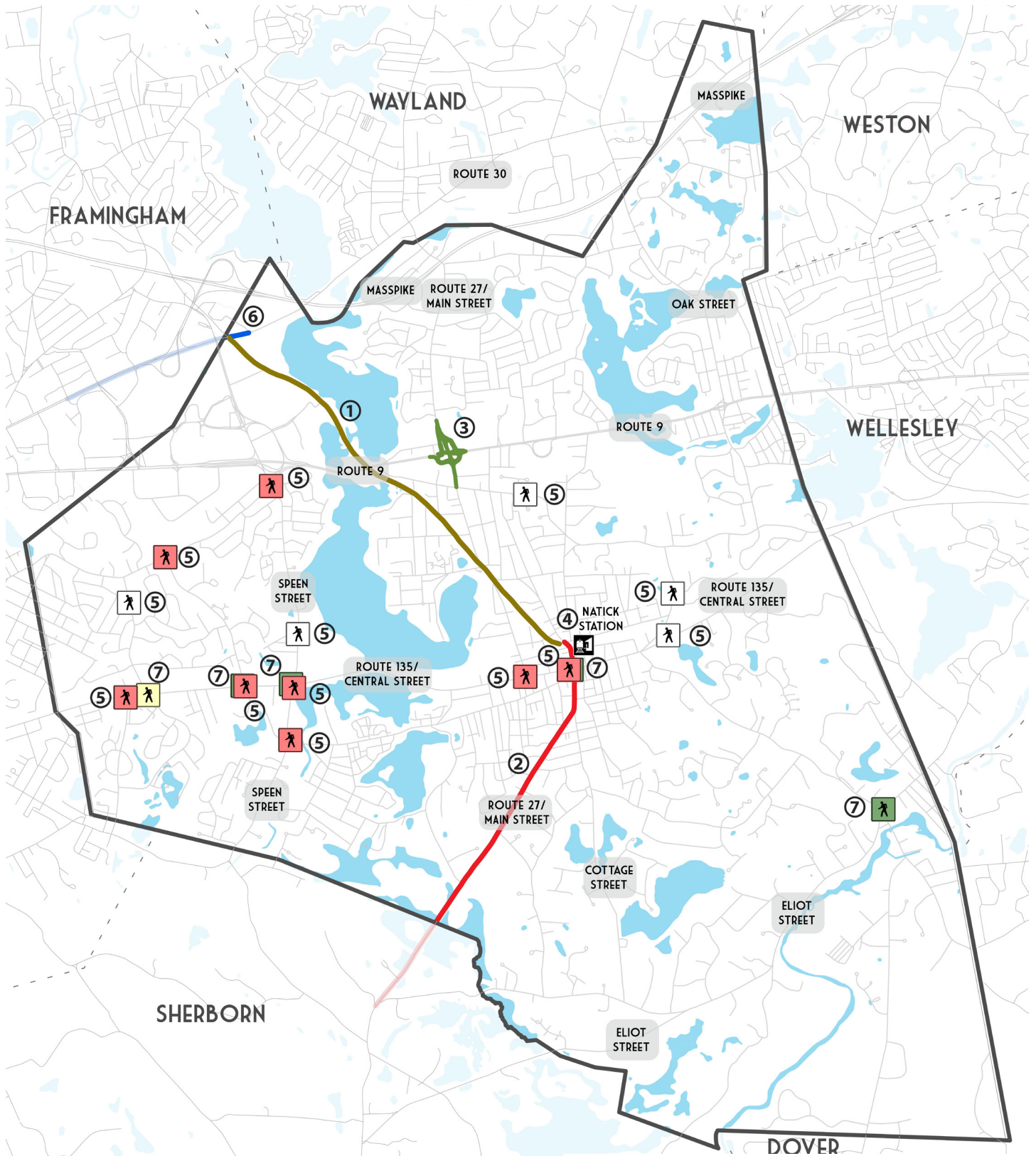
Public Capital Investment Projects

The following are planned or proposed transportation system projects that would entail investment in the transportation system using public funding. Most of the projects have funding identified, as discussed below, and therefore have a high likelihood of implementation. They will significantly improve Natick's transportation network in coming years.









There are seven Public Capital Investment Projects that have been summarized below. They are:

1. Cochituate Rail Trail (CRT)
2. Reconstruction of Route 27 (North Main Street), from North Avenue to the Wayland Town Line
3. Bridge Replacement and Interchange Improvements: Route 27 (North Main Street) Over Route 9 (Worcester Street)
4. Natick Center Station Accessibility Project
5. Natick Complete Streets Tier 3 Construction Project
6. Route 30 Arterial Segment Study in Framingham and Natick Location: Route 30 (Cochituate Road)
7. Low Cost Signal Improvements

Map 4.11 shows the locations of these projects.



MAP 4.11. PUBLIC CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS IN NATICK

-  Cochichuate Rail Trail
-  Reconstruction of Route 27
-  Bridge Replacement and Interchange Improvements
-  Route 30 Arterial Segment Study
-  MBTA Stations
-  Installation of RRFB
-  Installation of HAWK signal
-  Upgrade pedestrian signal and bicycle signs

Cochituate Rail Trail (CRT)

This \$6.7 million project entails the construction of a shared-use path with overlook areas, encompassing a 2.4-mile stretch of the abandoned Saxonville Branch of the former Boston and Albany Railroad (now CSX) and a 0.25-mile connection to Speen Street known as the Wonder Bread Spur. The project follows the existing railroad right-of-way from Commonwealth Road (Route 30) in Framingham to the Natick Center MBTA Commuter Rail Station. Other improvements include connection to the Framingham segment of the CRT via a new bridge over Route 30, replacement of an existing bridge structure over Route 9 with a prefabricated pedestrian bridge, storm water management design, and additional path access locations. The project is funded in the 2018 elements of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with construction expected to begin winter 2018-2019.

Reconstruction of Route 27 (North Main Street), from North Avenue to the Wayland Town Line

The project entails reconstruction of Route 27 (North Main Street) beginning at North Avenue (just north of Route 135) and extends northerly 2.2 miles to the Wayland town line, excluding the Route 9 interchange (see subsequent project). The proposed improvements include minor widening of the section of roadway south of Route 9 to a more consistent cross-section; Complete Streets design improvements, including sidewalk reconstruction to provide consistent, high-quality concrete sidewalks on both sides of the roadway; and traffic signal upgrades, including improvements to existing signals and, if warrants are met, new signals at Lake Street, Rutledge Road and Pine Street. The \$10.7 million project is funded in the 2019 elements of the Boston Region MPO TIP, with construction expected to begin autumn 2019.

Bridge Replacement and Interchange Improvements: Route 27 (North Main Street) Over Route 9 (Worcester Street)

The purpose of this \$24.6 million project is to address deterioration in the Route 27 bridge over Route 9, improve roadway and ramp geometry, and improve traffic operations and safety. Proposed operational improvements include modifying the existing three quadrant cloverleaf interchange to provide a partial cloverleaf ramping system with auxiliary lanes on Route 9. It also includes bridge replacement, modification of cross-section elements to Route 9 and Route 27, consolidation of access control, additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities and crossing accommodations, traffic signal upgrades, new traffic signals, construction/reconstruction of sidewalks, as well as grading and related improvements to storm water collection facilities. The project is funded in the 2019 elements of the Boston Region MPO TIP.

Natick Center Station Accessibility Project

The primary purpose of this \$3.5 million project is to support current and projected transit ridership in the Town of Natick by providing an upgraded MBTA commuter rail station that integrates universal access in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A reconstructed Natick Center Station will also provide enhanced access for all modes of travel; facilitate efficient rail operations, and support community and economic development in Natick Center.

A reconstructed station would expand the current function of a commuter rail platform to become a multimodal transit hub integrating the existing MBTA commuter rail service, MWRTA bus service, and a potential connection to the future Cochituate Rail Trail, all within a vibrant, transit oriented, walkable Natick Center. The motivation behind this study was the lack of ADA-compliant access to the commuter rail platforms (no ramps or elevators); inadequate pick-up/drop off space for private vehicles and buses at the existing station; inadequate bicycle parking provided at the existing station; limited pedestrian access to the existing station due to steep, narrow, single point of access to platforms, and insufficient pedestrian paths from Natick Center; and lack of an established connection for the planned Cochituate Rail Trail (CRT).

Primary recommendations of this study include:

- + Design of connections between the proposed CRT and the Natick Center MBTA station is planned for street level due to safety concerns associated with a direct connection from the proposed trail to the commuter rail platform.
- + The study also recognizes the possibility of an additional long-range alternative: a future transit connection between Natick Center Station and the CRT. As a result of increased development density, MWRTA expects ridership demand to increase between Natick Center and the vicinity of the Natick Mall. Therefore, the study proposes that future options for “clean transit” use of the CRT in the future (i.e., electric vehicles so that emissions are not a concern with a multi-modal corridor), in addition to the pedestrians and bicyclists, should not be precluded.

Natick Complete Streets Tier 3 Construction Project

This \$6.7 million project entails the construction of a shared-use path with overlook areas, encompassing a 2.4-mile stretch of the abandoned Saxonville Branch of the former Boston and Albany Railroad (now CSX) and a 0.25-mile connection to Speen Street known as the Wonder Bread Spur. The project follows the existing railroad right-of-way from Commonwealth Road (Route 30) in Framingham to the Natick Center MBTA Commuter Rail Station. Other improvements include connection to the Framingham segment of the CRT via a new bridge over Route 30, replacement of an existing bridge structure over Route 9 with a prefabricated pedestrian bridge, storm water management design, and additional path access locations. The project is funded in the 2018 elements of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with construction expected to begin winter 2018-2019.

Route 30 Arterial Segment Study in Framingham and Natick Location: Route 30 (Cochituate Road)

In 2013, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) of the Boston Region MPO completed a corridor study of Route 30 from Ring Road in Framingham to the TJX Companies driveway in Natick. The study purpose was to address significant mobility, congestion and safety issues for pedestrians, bicycles, and motorists in the segment. The study provided alternatives to address the operational and safety issues that would need to be addressed after the completion of the Cochituate Rail Trail (CRT) project in the near future. The following issues were identified:

- + Trail crossings should follow pedestrian desire lines
- + Bicyclists should not have to walk their bikes to an intersection
- + Crossings should avoid busy driveways
- + Crossings should avoid site conditions that pose risks for trail users, e.g., crossing busy Route 30 at-grade.

The study identified three options for closing the gaps in the existing bicycle and pedestrian circulation, including recommendations for signs and markings; traffic signal retiming schemes at four signalized intersections; traffic management options for the Route 30 segment between Speen Street and the Massachusetts Turnpike on ramp; and six medium- and long-term concepts for reconfiguring the connection of Speen Street and Route 30 to the Massachusetts Turnpike, including adding a westbound traffic lane to Route 30 from the TJX driveway to the I-90 connector.

The preferred alternative for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations entails construction of new sidewalks and multiuse paths around the outer loop of the MassPike connector south of Route 30 for accessing businesses near the Route 30 and Speen Street intersection, as well as the Cochituate Rail Trail. The MPO staff also analyzed four crossing options to improve safety for trail users at the Route 30 crossing; the preferred alternative was a grade separation (overpass or underpass), though this is a very expensive option with significant property impacts. Other improvement recommendations included installing sidewalk buffers, installing countdown timers at signals to help pedestrians make informed decisions about crossing the road, shared bicycle lane markings (“sharrows”) on pavements, and fine-tuning traffic signals on Route 30 from Beacon Street to Burr Street and Speen Street. Additional lane geometry modifications to improve safety at various commercial driveways were also suggested. This project ties in with The Golden Triangle Planning Study.

Low Cost Signal Improvements

The Boston Region MPO funded a project to diagnose traffic congestion and operational issues at key intersections in Natick. The project has evaluated traffic issues at several Natick intersections, and will provide low cost traffic signal timing and phasing improvements to reduce vehicle delay and traffic congestion and ensure that intersections comply with all current State and Federal regulations. The Town of Natick selected the following intersections:

- + West Central Street (Route 135) at Mill Street
- + East Central Street (Route 135)/West Central Street (Route 135)/Main Street (Route 27)/South Main Street (Route 27)
- + West Central Street (Route 135) at Speen Street
- + Union Street/Pleasant Street/Eliot Street (Route 16)

Recommendations for these intersections focused on adjusting signal timings and updating signal equipment.



TRANSPORTATION 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.



Natick has a well-developed transportation system that nevertheless faces a number of challenges to satisfying residents' and visitors' travel needs, now and into the future. Drawing from an understanding of the existing conditions of Natick's transportation system and keeping in mind the identified issues and opportunities, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for the future of transportation 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. Improve safety in all travel modes through the implementation of proven safety counter-measures, such as improved traffic control equipment, upgraded pedestrian crossings (e.g. median and crossing islands), roadway design improvements/road diets, access management measures along commercial corridors, and roundabouts.**
- 2. Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by improving/increasing multi-modal access, including vehicular access, public transit, walking, bicycling and ride-sharing.**

Existing conditions and key transportation issues that were identified in earlier phases of the Master Plan were reviewed in the context of these goals.

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.



Planned upgrades to the Natick Center Commuter Rail Station will improve accessibility at the station.

GOAL 1

Improve safety in all travel modes through the implementation of a Complete Streets design approach, roadway and intersection improvements, and proven safety counter-measures.

The Natick 2030+ Master Plan approach to transportation system improvements is intended to improve safety and comfort for all roadway users. The alternatives reviewed and The Plan's recommendations are designed to improve safety using proven safety countermeasures, such as improved intersection geometry and traffic operations, upgraded pedestrian accommodation, traffic calming/road diets, access management measures, and roundabouts. The following are some of the design approaches and specific measures that the Natick 2030+ Team recommends for transportation system improvements.



R1.1

EMPLOY A COMPLETE STREET DESIGN APPROACH

LEAD



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

A Complete Streets design approach is a core transportation design principle for the Town of Natick and for the Natick 2030+ Master Plan. A Complete Streets design approach entails ensuring the safe and convenient accommodation of all roadway users – not just drivers, but also pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit riders, with a focus on ensuring safety and accommodation of vulnerable roadway users, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and children. The Town of Natick's Board of Selectmen unanimously adopted a municipal Complete Streets Policy in 2015 to not only improve safety, but also enhance "health, economic viability, and quality of life." In 2015, Smart Growth America ranked Natick's Complete Streets Policy the seventh best new Complete Streets Policy in America, and it has enabled the Town of Natick to win grant funding from MassDOT to upgrade intersections and pedestrian crossings. A rendering of a comprehensive Complete Streets treatment on a hypothetical urban arterial is provided below. **The Town should continue to implement the Complete Streets policies into all roadway improvement projects.**



ON-GOING



Example of Complete Streets treatment for hypothetical urban arterial roadway.

R1.2

IMPLEMENT PROVEN SAFETY COUNTERMEASURES

LEAD 
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT








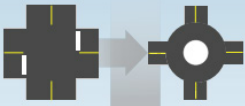
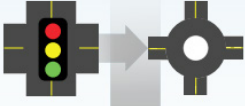
SUPPORT 
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Proven safety countermeasures are roadway design and operating strategies that have been demonstrated as effective at improving roadway safety and endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). These countermeasures include:

- + Pedestrian refuge medians for crossing wide arterial roadways
- + Road diets to eliminate unnecessary general travel lanes, shorten pedestrian crossings, and provide additional roadway width for other modes
- + Roundabouts to reduce crash severity
- + Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI), to provide crossing pedestrians with a “head start” before turning vehicles



The Town of Natick should consider these measures as potential design elements that should be evaluated for inclusion in all roadway improvement projects, as appropriate to the project context.

 <p>Road Diets (Roadway Reconfiguration)</p> <p>A “Road Diet,” or roadway reconfiguration, can improve safety, calm traffic, provide better mobility and access for all road users, and enhance overall quality of life.</p> <p>SAFETY BENEFIT:</p> <p>4-LANE → 3-LANE ROAD DIET CONVERSIONS 19-47% Reduction in total crashes</p>	 <p>Leading Pedestrian Intervals</p> <p>SAFETY BENEFIT:</p> <p>60% Reduction in pedestrian-vehicle crashes at intersections</p>   <p>LPIs are beneficial at intersections with high left-turning volumes. Source: pedbikeimages.org / Burden</p>	 <p>Medians and Pedestrian Crossing Islands in Urban and Suburban Areas</p>  <p>Median and pedestrian crossing islands near a roundabout. Source: www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden</p> <p>SAFETY BENEFITS:</p> <p>RAISED MEDIAN 46% Reduction in pedestrian crashes</p> <p>PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ISLAND 56% Reduction in pedestrian crashes</p>	 <p>Roundabouts</p> <p>TWO-WAY STOP-CONTROLLED INTERSECTION TO A ROUNDABOUT</p>  <p>82% Reduction in severe crashes</p> <p>SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION TO A ROUNDABOUT</p>  <p>78% Reduction in severe crashes</p>
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Proven safety countermeasures (Source: FHWA)

GOAL 2

Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by improving multi-modal access, including vehicular access, public transit, walking, bicycling and ride-sharing.

The Natick 2030+ Team recommends a range of transportation system improvements to enhance access in all travel modes.



LEAD



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY
COMMITTEE



ON-GOING



REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY BY MANAGING TRAFFIC BOTTLENECKS, IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY OF THE ROADWAY NETWORK, AND UPGRADING INTERSECTION DESIGN AND TRAFFIC CONTROLS.

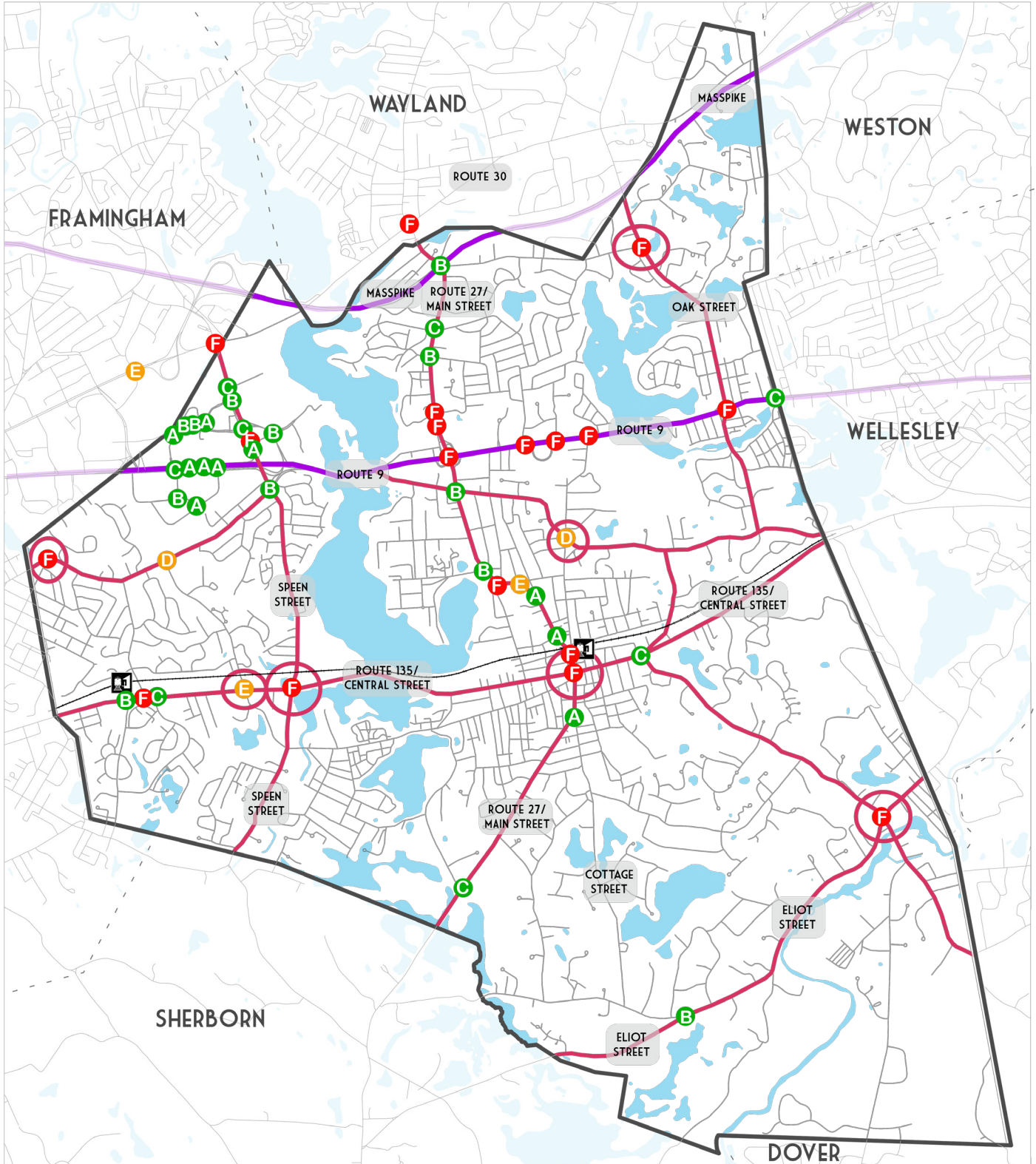
Natick's many lakes and its express highway and railway corridors create significant barriers for local traffic, as well as pedestrian and bicycle access. As shown on Map 4.12 and discussed in Existing Conditions, there are a limited number of continuous east-west and north-south roads, and a large number of dead ends and cul-de-sacs in residential neighborhoods further impede access. Improving connections throughout the Town is of key importance. **To that end, the Town should look for opportunities to create connections between dead ends and cul de sacs and highlight dead ends that could be connected over time (some of these connections are identified in Chapter 7: Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources). The subdivision regulations should include a provision stating that, where possible, those connections should be made, either with a roadway or pedestrian/bike connection.**

At the same time, due to Natick's long history, its major surface streets are historic roads that were laid out long before the advent of the automobile and its attendant congestion. Property lines and buildings constrain the width of these roadways, especially at major intersections. As a result of these factors, Natick's traffic local traffic is largely concentrated on a limited number of narrow streets, which contributes to roadway congestion.

Map 4.12 shows the principal roadways in Natick and the major intersections where they come together, alongside a map of the existing evening peak hour traffic "levels of service" (LOS) at key intersections in Natick. As shown, Natick's natural and man-made barriers concentrate traffic onto a handful of surface streets; where these intersect, significant congestion (LOS E/F) frequently results.

The Natick 2030+ Project Team reviewed these intersections and identified opportunities to address traffic congestion and multimodal access through improved geometric design and traffic operations. The following are strategies and design guidelines that the Project Team used for improving these intersections.

- + Balanced allocation of roadway space, per Complete Streets principles.
- + 11-foot general traffic lanes, with use of 10-foot or 10.5-foot lanes in constrained conditions.
- + Preservation of existing curb lines where possible to enable cost-effectiveness and facilitate near-term or medium-term implementation.



MAP 4.12 KEY CORRIDORS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

- L
E
G
E
N
D**
- ● ● Intersection Level of Service (PM Peak Hour)
 - M MBTA Stations
 - MBTA Commuter Rail
 - Limited Access Highways
 - Major Surface Streets
 - Intersection Improvement Opportunities

- + Where needed, upgrades to modern traffic signal equipment that can enable more efficient signal timing, coordination, and Transit Signal Priority (TSP).
- + Traffic signal timing plans that maximize intersection operational efficiency through strategies such as:
 - Coordinated signals, which minimize “wasted” green time and enable better traffic progression
 - Overlapping phases, which maximize the intersection movements that can flow at the same time

Concurrent pedestrian phasing, which allows pedestrians to cross at the same time that parallel/non-conflicting vehicular traffic flows (in contrast to exclusive pedestrian phasing, which stops all traffic and allows pedestrians to make all crossings)

Based on existing conditions analysis; identification of key transportation issues; and discussions with the community, Town officials, and the Planning Board, the following locations were identified as key locations for traffic congestion, safety, and/or multimodal access, and are the intersections that were evaluated for geometric and traffic operations improvements. For the most part, these are intersections where major surface streets intersect, as shown on Map 4.12:

- + Hartford Street/Bishop Street
- + Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 (Eliot Street)
- + Pine Street/Oak Street
- + Route 135 (East/West Central Street)/Route 27 (North/South Main Street)
- + Route 135 (West Central Street)/Speen Street
- + Route 135 (West Central Street)/Mill Street
- + Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Chestnut Street

Key issues, opportunities, and potential improvements are summarized for each of these locations, along with a high-level review of benefits and impacts of the potential improvements. Key evaluation criteria are traffic operations, pedestrian access, and bicycle access. The alternatives evaluation summarizes these criteria for a range of comparative conditions:

- + **Existing Conditions:** Actual current conditions.
- + **Future “No-Build” Conditions:** The conditions that would be anticipated for a future “horizon” year to allow for growth in travel demand and an opportunity for proposed improvements to be implemented. For the Natick 2030+ Master Plan, the future horizon year is 2027, 10 years from the baseline “Existing Conditions” year of 2017. The Future No-Build Condition reflects an annual one percent increase in traffic demand, along with improvement projects that are already planned.

- + **Future “Build” Conditions:** The conditions that would be expected based on a given improvement that is proposed as part of the Natick 2030+ planning process.

The proposed time frame for each intersection is based on ease of implementation, safety concerns and the existing level of congestion.

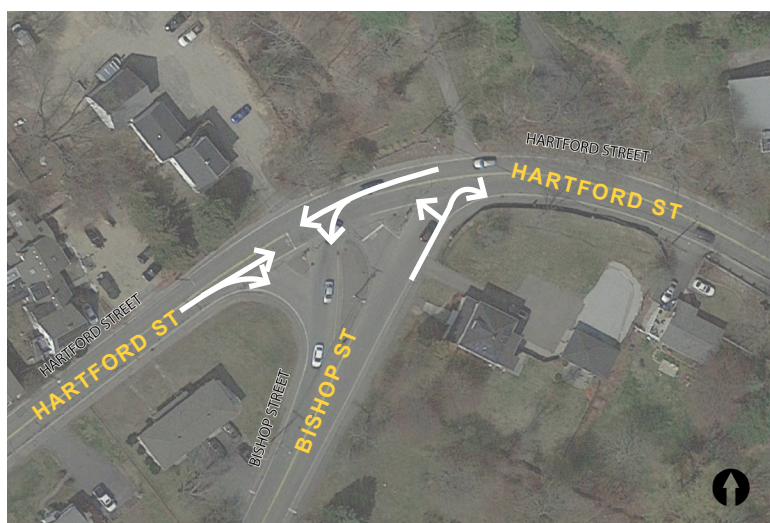
It is important to note that these are high-level and preliminary analyses based on reasonable growth projections; for all of these intersections, further study will be required to identify and finalize a preferred design. In some cases, the preferred alternative may be one that has not been identified in this Master Plan. Some options in this Plan may become obsolete if significant growth results in traffic volumes which cross the threshold for what can be accommodated by a specific option. Recommendations and final designs will be based on detailed traffic analyses conducted at the time a specific improvement is being implemented.

Hartford Street/Bishop Street

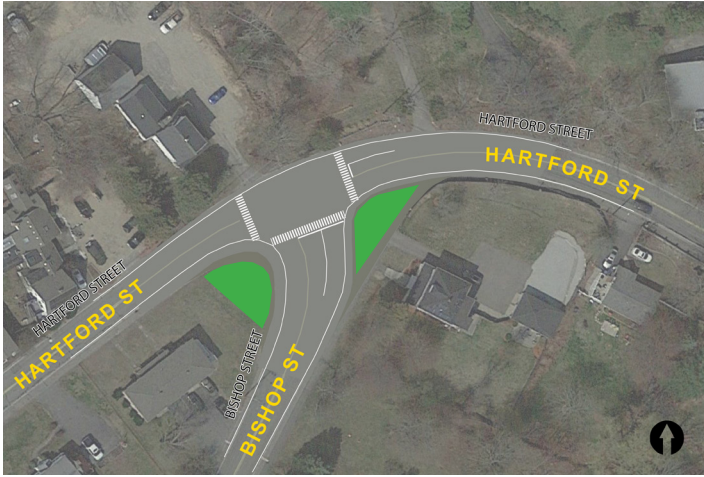
This intersection is at the western edge of Natick, near the Framingham line. Hartford Street is an important connection between Framingham and Route 9, the Massachusetts Turnpike, and the Golden Triangle. This intersection does not experience significant congestion, but it has several other issues that warrant review of its design.

Key Issues & Opportunities

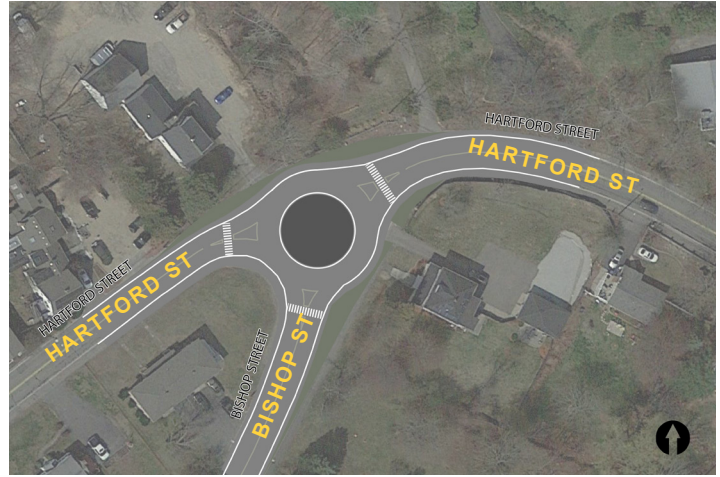
- + Horizontal curve at the intersection creates challenges for sight lines and visibility.
- + Unconventional traffic control, with two approaches controlled by stop signs and one approach uncontrolled, has the potential to create confusion.
- + Westbound Hartford Street’s downhill grade increases speeds, and potential for crashes.
- + Wide paved areas and lack of any crosswalks create a very pedestrian-unfriendly location.



Existing conditions at the Hartford Street/Bishop Street Intersection.



Proposed Conditions at the Hartford Street/Bishop Street Intersection: Option 1.



Proposed Conditions at the Hartford Street/Bishop Street Intersection: Option 2.

Potential Improvements

Option 1

- + Reconfigure intersection as a standard T-intersection, with narrower paved areas.
- + Provide crosswalks and pedestrian signage.
- + Create plaza areas with unneeded space.

Option 2

- + Reconfigure intersection as a single-lane roundabout.

Option 1 results in:

- + Improved operations for Hartford Street eastbound traffic (no longer stop-controlled).
- + Minor delay for Hartford Street westbound left turns.
- + Improved operations for Bishop Street right turns (heavy movement).
- + Slightly worse operations for Bishop Street left turns (very low-volume movement).
- + Reduced pavement area should slow traffic and improve safety.
- + Crosswalks significantly improve pedestrian access and safety.
- + Potential for creation of hardscaped or landscaped plaza areas.

The LOS for Option 1 only applies to the Bishop Street movements. The LOS D in the morning peak and the LOS F in the evening peak apply to very low left turn volumes. LOS C and LOS B for the Bishop Street right turns represent generally acceptable/good LOS in a suburban area. The Hartford Street traffic experiences no delay, which is not reflected in the LOS numbers.

Option 2 results in:

- + Reduced congestion.
- + Reduced vehicle speeds and improved safety relative to the existing condition.

LOS is not the only consideration. Both options would improve access for pedestrians by implementing crosswalks and shortening crossing distances. And, both options would enable traffic to continue flowing (through traffic on Hartford Street or all approaches at the roundabout), so pedestrian access would require good signage and driver compliance.



The Town should further assess both options and implement the preferred option. Option 1 would provide a design that is similar to current conditions, but would significantly improve pedestrian access and would create landscaped or hardscaped plaza areas. Tightening the T intersection and adjusting the traffic control would be less expensive and disruptive to neighbors and travelers than a roundabout. Roundabouts are frequently an excellent option, but a roundabout does not appear to be necessary to address congestion and safety issues at this location. If a roundabout were desired, however, it would be an appropriate design, particularly should there be a significant growth in traffic volumes.

**The LOS ratings are for the north-bound Bishop Street left turn onto Hartford Street (on the left) and right turn onto Hartford Street (on the right).*

	EXISTING	NO-BUILD	OPTION 1	OPTION 2
Traffic				
AM LOS*	C / C	C / C	D / C	A
PM LOS*	D / D	E / E	F / B	A
Pedestrian*	No Crosswalks	No Crosswalks	Crosswalks on all Approaches	Crosswalks on all Approaches

TABLE 4.13 EVALUATION OF INTERSECTION OF HARTFORD STREET & BISHOP STREET

Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 (Eliot Street)

This intersection is at the center of South Natick. The intersection is an important crossroads, with Route 16 running through South Natick to connect Wellesley with Sherborn, Union Street connecting to Natick Center, and Pleasant Street connecting to Dover. The area around the intersection is also the village center for South Natick, with stores, churches, schools, and recreational areas surrounded by residential neighborhoods. As in other areas of Natick, the surface street network is limited, and these roadways provide the major connections for the area. Therefore, the intersection accommodates significant traffic volumes, but the roadway widths at the intersection are constrained.

Key Issues & Opportunities

- + Heavy traffic flows result in congestion and queuing.
- + Limited potential for widening due to adjacent buildings and private property.

Potential Improvements

Option 1

- + Reconfigure northbound Pleasant Street approach to provide dedicated left-turn lane, combined through-right lane.
- + Concurrent pedestrian phase with Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI).

Option 2

- + Prohibit Route 16 eastbound and westbound left turns.
- + Change circulation on Robert Sproule Lane (behind Eliot Church) from two-way to one-way westbound to provide connections for Route 16 left turns.
- + Provide dedicated left turn lanes and shared through-right lanes on northbound Pleasant Street approach and southbound Union Street approach.
- + Concurrent pedestrian phase with Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI).

Option 3

- + Create one-way counter-clockwise circulation pattern around Eliot Church
 - Route 16 eastbound left turns circulate via Robert Sproule Lane
 - All Route 16 westbound traffic circulates via Robert Sproule Lane
- + Exclusive pedestrian phase due to conflicts on western leg of intersection

Option 3 cannot be a roundabout; but rather has to be a one-way loop. There needs to be a signal at the intersection of Route 16/Eliot Street with Pleasant and Union Streets. Any recommended option will need to address weaving issues on the legs of the loop, especially on the north and southeast sides, as well as pedestrian access and safety.

Option 1 Evaluation:

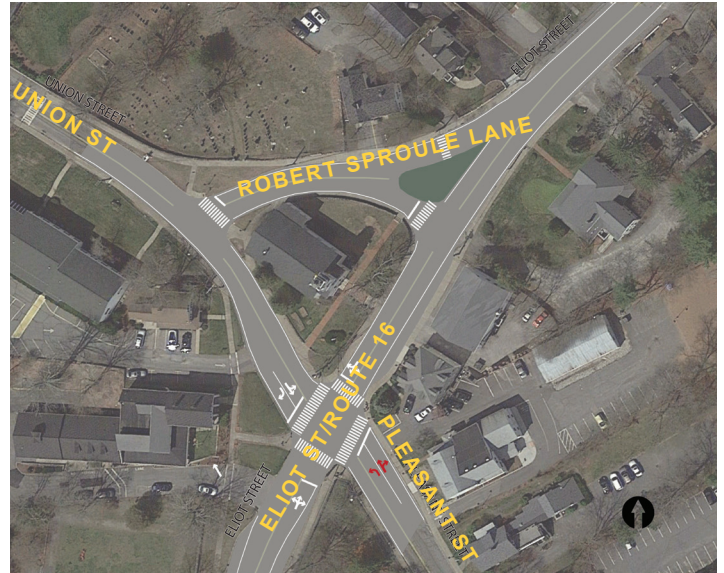
- + Simple fix requiring only restriping and lane reallocation on northbound Pleasant Street approach.
- + Morning peak period traffic operations are comparable to No-Build condition due to heavy northbound Pleasant Street right-turn demand (must share lane with through-traffic).
- + Afternoon peak period traffic operations are significantly improved from No-Build due to a more efficient signal plan and fewer northbound right turns.

Option 2 Evaluation

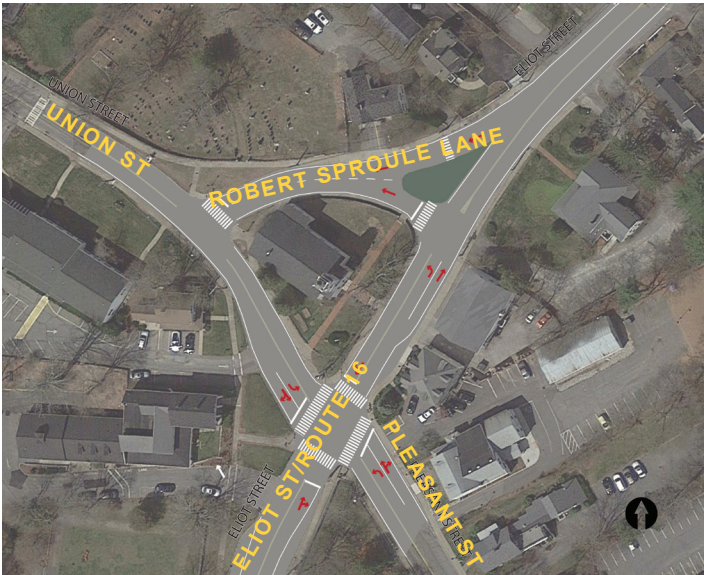
- + More significant change in circulation due to elimination of Union Street and Pleasant Street left turns, use of Robert Sproule Lane to accommodate these turns.



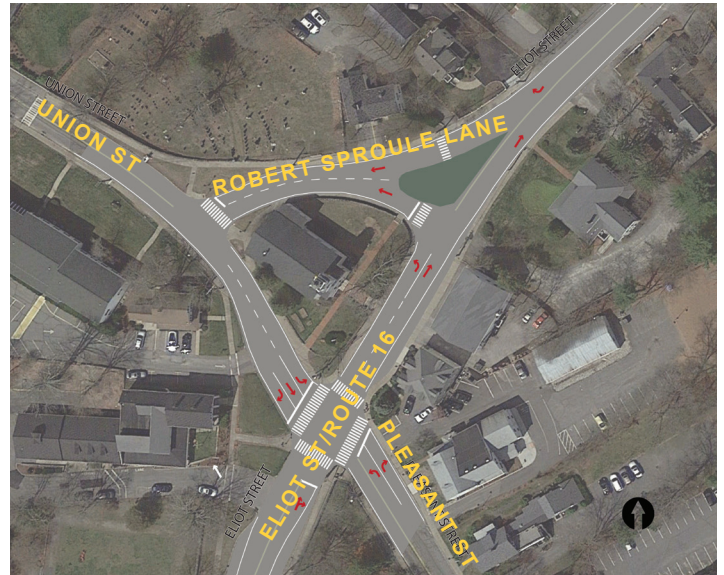
Existing conditions at the Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 Intersection.



Proposed conditions at the Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 Intersection: Option 1.



Proposed conditions at the Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 Intersection: Option 2.



Proposed conditions at the Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 Intersection: Option 3.

	EXISTING	NO-BUILD	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Traffic					
AM LOS	C	D	D	E	D
PM LOS	F	F	D	D	C
Pedestrian	Exclusive Phase	Exclusive Phase	Concurrent Phase w/ LPI	Concurrent Phase w/ LPI	Exclusive Phase

TABLE 4.14 EVALUATION OF PLEASANT STREET/UNION STREET/ROUTE 16 (ELIOT STREET)

- + Potential for weaving conflicts on Robert Sproule Lane.
- + Morning peak period traffic operations are worse than No-Build condition.
- + Afternoon peak period traffic operations are significantly improved from No-Build due to a more efficient signal plan and fewer northbound right turns.

Option 3 Evaluation

- + Major change to circulation in center of South Natick village.
 - One-way circulation pattern tends to speed up traffic, less pedestrian-friendly than two-way circulation.
 - Puts Eliot Church in center of heavy circulating traffic.
 - Potential for weaving conflicts on Robert Sproule Lane.
- + Morning peak period traffic operations comparable to No-Build condition.
- + Afternoon peak period traffic operations significantly improved from No-Build due to elimination of movements, use of one-way circulation.



I-5 YEARS



It is recommended that this intersection be studied in further detail prior to the selection of any preferred alternative.

Pine Street/Oak Street/Erie Drive

This intersection is in the northeast corner of Natick, near the Wayland town line. Oak Street is an important north-south connection between Route 9 and Wayland, while Pine Street provides connections to the MassPike and The Golden Triangle via Route 27 and Route 30. This intersection carries heavy traffic volumes, and has significant peak period congestion.

Key Issues & Opportunities

- + Significant congestion and delay for stop-controlled Pine Street approach.

Potential Improvements

Option 1: All-way stop control.

Option 2: Widen eastbound Pine Street approach to two lanes: a left-turn lane and a right-turn lane.

Option 3: Signal control

Option 4: Single-lane roundabout



Existing conditions at the Pine Street/Oak Street/Erie Drive Intersection.



Proposed conditions at the Pine Street/Oak Street/Erie Drive Intersection: Option 4.

	EXISTING	NO-BUILD	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
Traffic	Pine St stop	Pine St stop	Pine St stop, 2 lanes	All-way stop	Signal	Roundabout
AM LOS	F	F	F C	F F E	C	B
PM LOS	F	F	F C	F D F	B	B
Pedestrian	Crosswalk on Pine st only	Crosswalk on Pine st only	Crosswalk on all legs	Crosswalk on all legs	Crosswalk on all legs	Crosswalk on all legs

TABLE 4.15 EVALUATION OF INTERSECTION OF PINE ST/OAK ST/ERIE DRIVE

Option 1 would not significantly improve Pine Street traffic access and operations. Option 2 would not significantly improve Pine Street traffic access and operations, and would have negative impacts on Oak Street traffic access and operations. Option 3 would improve Pine Street traffic access and operations, but would have negative impacts on Oak Street traffic access and operations by adding delay from the traffic signal. **Therefore, Option 4, the single lane roundabout, is recommended because it improves access and operations for Pine Street traffic without adding major delay for Oak Street traffic.** A roundabout is also proposed for the intersection of Pine Street with Route 27.



1-5 YEARS



Route 135 (East/West Central Street)/Route 27 (North/South Main Street)

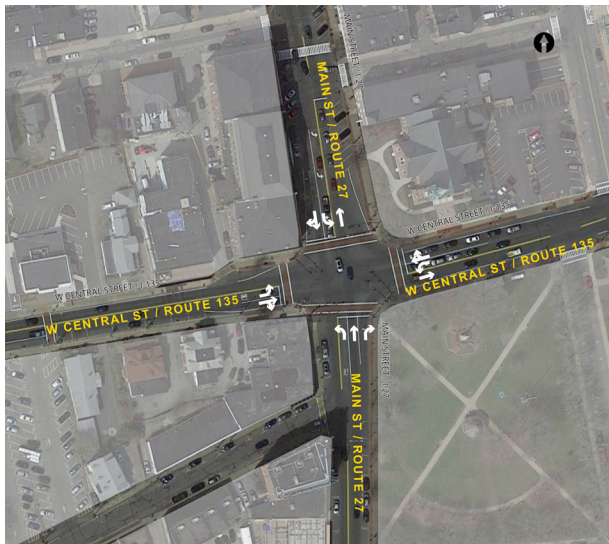
This is a major intersection, and Natick's main crossroads. It is located at the heart of Natick, in the Town's historic center and commercial district. It is also the intersection of Natick's most important surface streets, Route 135 and Route 27. These two streets run continuously across the town and provide critical connections through Natick's lakes, wetlands, express highways, railroad, and major commercial parcels. Like many other surface streets, Route 135 and Route 27 are constrained in width, as is their intersection.

Key Issues & Opportunities

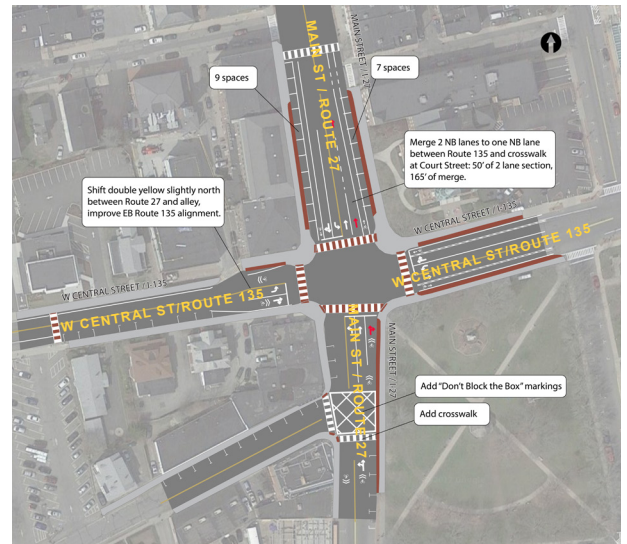
- + Heavy traffic flows result in congestion and queuing.
- + Wide paved areas produce long pedestrian crossings.
- + Lack of bicycle access through intersection.
- + Limited potential for widening due to buildings and green space.
- + On-street parking, including angle parking, is important to residents and businesses.

Potential Improvements

- + Convert northbound right-turn lane to through-right lane – the provision of two northbound Route 27 through-traffic lanes requires that these lanes merge back to a single lane by Court Street.
- + Implement concurrent pedestrian phasing with Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI). An LPI typically gives pedestrians a several second head start when entering an intersection with a corresponding green signal in the same direction of travel to enhance visibility of pedestrians in the intersection.



Existing Route 135/Route 27 intersection



Proposed Route 135/Route 27 intersection

- + Add pedestrian neckdowns.
- + Add bike lanes on Route 27 north of Route 135, and on Route 135 east of Route 27.
- + “Don’t block the box” markings and crosswalk at Pond Street.
- + Convert angle parking on Route 27 to parallel parking to improve the pedestrian environment and provide width for an additional northbound lane – as illustrated in the adjacent figure, there is no net loss of parking. The change in parking layout will need to be carefully studied and perhaps tested temporarily to ease concerns. Suggested changes to the existing parking layout have met with opposition in the past.



4-7 YEARS



The proposed design, traffic operations, and parking changes represent a significant improvement for traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists and should be evaluated further for potential implementation.

Route 135 (West Central Street)/Speen Street

Speen Street is an important north – south connection, providing access from many neighborhoods on Natick’s west side to Route 9, the MassPike, and The Golden Triangle. This location is an important crossing of two major local roadways, and also provides access for the Roche Brothers supermarket shopping center. It is constrained by environmentally sensitive water bodies at three corners.

Key Issues & Opportunities

- + Heavy traffic flows result in congestion and queuing
- + Lack of bicycle access through intersection
- + Limited potential for widening due to wetlands adjacent to the northwest, southwest, and southeast corners of the intersection

Potential Improvements

- + Widen westbound Route 135 approach to add right turn lane (adjacent to CVS property). Further assessment should consider the potential for a right turn lane to reduce breaks in the westbound Route 135 traffic (breaks currently provide opportunities for cars to exit the CVS parking lot) and recommend mitigation measures for that impact.
- + Extend westbound Route 135 left turn lane to address left turn demand, unsafe crossings of double-yellow center line.
- + Implement concurrent pedestrian phasing with Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI).
- + Add bike lanes on Route 135.



Existing and Proposed Conditions at the Route 135/Speen Street Intersection.

	EXISTING	NO-BUILD	PROPOSED
Traffic			
AM Level of Service (LOS)	F	F	E
PM Level of Service (LOS)	F	F	F
Pedestrian	Exclusive Phase	Exclusive Phase	Concurrent Phase w/ LPI
Bicycle	No Bike Lanes	No Bike Lanes	Bike Lanes on Route 135

TABLE 4.16 EVALUATION OF 135/SPEEN ST INTERSECTION

The proposed changes offers moderate improvements in congestion and queuing for all movements during both morning and afternoon peak periods, even though the intersection continues to operate at LOS E in the morning peak hour and LOS F in the afternoon peak hour. **Because this proposal has only modest improvements, further evaluation should consider the overall value in making these changes.**



4-7 YEARS

Route 135 (West Central Street)/Mill Street

Mill Street provides an important connection between Route 135 and Hartford Street. Its intersection with Route 135 carries heavy traffic flows and experiences significant peak period congestion, but property constraints limit the opportunity for widening.

Key Issues & Opportunities

- + Heavy traffic flows result in congestion and queuing
- + Lack of bicycle access through intersection



Existing and Proposal Conditions at the Route 135/Mill Street Intersection.

- + Limited potential for widening due to Henry Wilson Park on the northwest corner and private homes with limited setbacks on the southwest and south-east corners of the intersection

Potential Improvements

- + Widen northeastern corner of intersection to provide a dedicated left-turn lane from Mill Street southbound onto Route 135 eastbound
- + Implement concurrent pedestrian phasing with Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI)
- + Add bike lanes on Route 135. The northwest corner of the intersection could potentially become the start of a shared use path, rather than a separate bicycle path and sidewalk, continuing west on Route 135 (see page 4.68 for a more detailed discussion).
- + Review signal phasing to ensure the intersection is functioning efficiently

	EXISTING	NO-BUILD	PROPOSED
Traffic			
AM Level of Service (LOS)	F	F	E
PM Level of Service (LOS)	F	F	F
Pedestrian	Exclusive Phase	Exclusive Phase	Concurrent Phase w/ LPI
Bicycle	No Bike Lanes	No Bike Lanes	Bike Lanes on Route 135

TABLE 4.17 EVALUATION OF I35/SPEEN ST INTERSECTION



4-7 YEARS



The proposed improvements result in improvements in congestion and queuing for Mill Street movements, but on Route 135 some movements improve while others worsen, and there is no improvement from overall LOS F in both morning and afternoon peak hours. **Further evaluation should consider the overall value in making these changes.**

Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Belvedere Street

Walnut Street and Bacon Street are important neighborhood collector streets in the neighborhood north of Natick Center around the Walnut Hill School for the Arts. These streets, along with Chestnut Street, a local residential street, are adjacent to Loker Park. This intersection operates with all-way stop control; it experiences intermittent congestion on some approaches, but it only infrequently experiences significant congestion.

Key Issues & Opportunities

- + Wide paved areas due to skewed intersection.
- + Lack of sidewalks and crosswalks create unfriendly pedestrian environment.

Potential Improvements

- + Tighten southeast corner of intersection to shorten crossing distances.
- + Add crosswalks on all approaches.
- + Add sidewalk on east side of Walnut Street from Deerfield Lane to Belvedere Street.
- + Tighten corners at Belvedere Street/Walnut Street and Belvedere Street/Bacon St.

The proposed improvements result in no change in traffic operations or queuing, but significantly improve pedestrian access and safety. Some trucks (a very low proportion of vehicles on Walnut Street) could no longer turn right from Walnut Street northbound to Bacon Street eastbound; they could, however, make this connection via Belvedere Street.



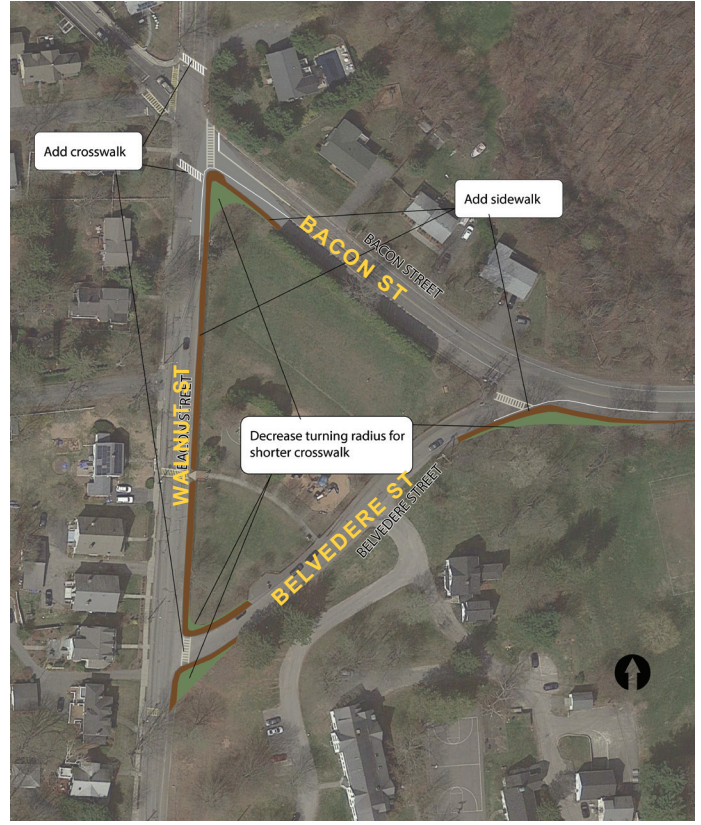
4-7 YEARS



The Town should move forward with these improvements because they offer significant benefits for pedestrian access to Loker Park and along major neighborhood streets without negative impacts on vehicular access or circulation.



Existing conditions at the Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Belvedere Street Intersection.



Proposed conditions at the Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Belvedere Street Intersection.



ENCOURAGE WALKING AND BICYCLING AS MODES OF TRAVEL AND EXERCISE THROUGH IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND ENVIRONMENT, AN EXPANDED PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK, AND IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY.

LEAD 
 PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 
 COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

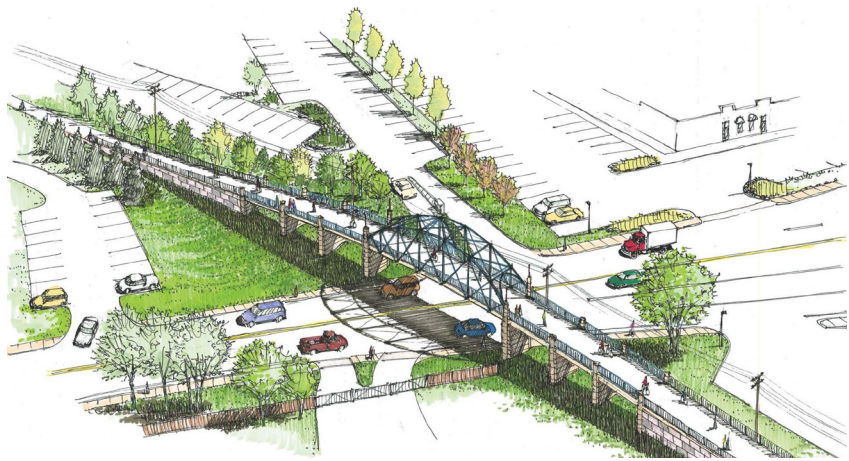
The intersection improvements described under Recommendation 2.1 include traffic operations improvements as well as significant multimodal improvements. Recommendation 2.2 addresses several key corridors that would benefit from “traffic calming” improvements to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

There are several ongoing projects that will improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety along important corridors in Natick. These include the following:

- + Route 27 North – This project, which is being designed and built by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), would rebuild Route 27 from North Street in Natick Center to the Wayland town line. It would rebuild sidewalks, add crosswalks, and create continuous five-foot wide shoulders for bicycle accommodation.
- + Route 27 South – This project is being planned and designed by the Town of Natick for the section of Route 27 from Cottage Street in Natick Center to the

Sherborn town line. It would rebuild sidewalks, add crosswalks, narrow travel lanes, and create continuous four-foot wide shoulders for bicycle accommodation.

- + Cochituate Rail Trail – This project will create a 2.4 mile long shared-use path in the abandoned Saxonville Branch of the former Boston and Albany Railroad (now CSX) and a 0.25-mile connection to Speen Street known as the Wonder Bread Spur. The project follows the existing railroad right-of-way from Commonwealth Road (Route 30) in Framingham to the Natick Center MBTA Commuter Rail Station. This will provide an important pedestrian and bicycle connection for Natick Center, The Golden Triangle, and the neighborhoods of northwest Natick in between.



Rendering of Cochituate Rail Trail bridge over Route 30.

In addition to these corridors, there are other corridors that would benefit from pedestrian and bicycle access improvements. Principal among these are Route 135 and Speen Street.

Route 135 (East and West Central Street)

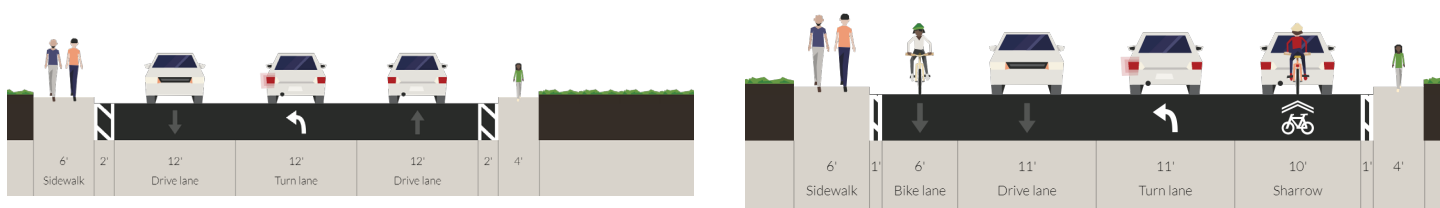
Route 135 is the main east-west surface street through Natick, and the only surface street (i.e. non-limited-access highway) that provides continuous east-west connections through Natick. It provides generally one travel lane in each direction, with additional turn lanes at intersections.

Key Issues & Opportunities

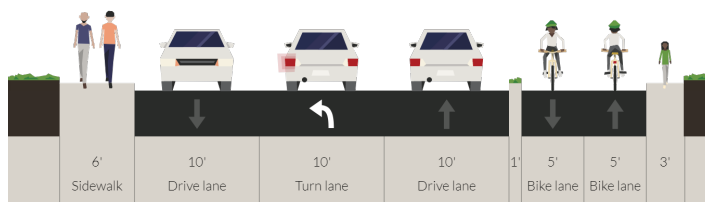
- + Route 135 is the best east-west bicycle connection through Natick, and connects to many destinations, but there are long gaps without bicycle lanes or shoulders wide enough to accommodate bicycle access.
- + Inconsistent bicycle accommodation.
- + Frequent, wide curb cuts create challenges for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.



Cross section of Route 135 showing existing condition with no left turn lane (left) and Option 1 with two one-way in-road bike lanes.



Cross section of Route 135 showing existing condition with left turn lane (left) and Option 1 with two one-way in-road bike lanes and one sharrow (shared bike/traffic lane).



Cross section of Route 135 showing left turn lane and Option 2 with one two-way separated bike lane.

Potential Improvements

- + Upgrade crosswalks at key intersections – these crosswalk improvements are reflected in the intersection improvements described above under Recommendation 2.1 at Route 135/Mill Street, Route 135/Speen Street, and Route 135/Route 27.
- + As parcels are redeveloped, identify opportunities to narrow and/or consolidate curb cuts through improved access management, and roadway connections within and between parcels.
- + Provide continuous bicycle accommodation:
 - Option 1 - Bike Lanes: Create continuous five to six-foot bicycle lanes along most of Route 135, with shared-bicycle lane markings (“sharrows”) on segments of Route 135 where intersection turning lanes or local constraints preclude bicycle lanes
 - Option 2 – Separated Bike-Way: Create a two-way separated bicycle way along one side or the other of Route 135 in order to provide a more secure bicycle facility that is suited to less experienced bicyclists.



4-7 YEARS



It is recommended that crosswalks be upgraded at key intersections. As parcels are redeveloped, curbcuts should be narrowed and/or consolidated. In the short- to medium-term, continuous 5-6 foot bicycle lanes should be provided in each direction through the re-striping of the existing paved roadway, widening of existing 4-5 foot shoulders, and narrowing of wide travel lanes. In the longer term, consideration could be given to a continuous two-way separated bicycle way along the northern side of Route 135, subject to the following considerations and caveats:

- + The two-way bicycle way should only be provided to the west of Route 27, where major intersection conflicts are less frequent than east of Route 27.
- + The two-way bicycle way would need to be implemented all at once in order to prevent discontinuous segments of bicycle lane and two-way separated bicycle way, which would require bicyclists to frequently cross conflicting traffic.
- + The two-way separated bicycle way would require physical separation, special treatment at intersections, and special traffic controls, which would result in a much higher cost than a painted bicycle lane in each direction.

Consideration also should be given to the long-term development of a two-way shared use path west of Route 27. The shared-use path would be subject to the same caveats listed above. In addition, although siting the path on the south side might be preferable because of fewer curbcuts, the presence of an existing sidewalk and the absence of utility interference, placing the path on the north side would provide better access to existing and potential future mixed-use development and the MBTA commuter rail station.



4-7 YEARS



Speen Street North of Route 135

Speen Street is a key north-south connection, and an important local roadway for residential neighborhoods of southwest Natick. North of Route 135, it is currently fairly unfriendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, with no bicycle accommodations and infrequent crosswalks.

Key Issues & Opportunities

- + Infrequent crosswalks – there are only four crosswalks across Speen Street in the one mile distance between Hartford Street and Route 135.
- + Lack of bicycle facilities.
- + Adequate width between Hartford Street and Route 135 to provide one travel lane in each direction plus bike lanes in each direction.
- + Continuous center left turn lanes between Hartford Street and Route 135 preclude bike lanes – these turn lanes are typically much longer than needed for the low-volume residential traffic using them.
- + Narrow cross-section (only 24 feet from curb-to-curb) from Route 135 to Sherborn town line.



Existing and proposed Speen Street roadway configuration, illustrating addition of bike lanes.

Potential Improvements

- + Consider shortening left turn lanes on Speen Street in order to provide roadway space for bicycle lanes in between shorter left turn lane segments.
- + Provision of bicycle sharrows on segments of Speen Street with inadequate width for bicycle lanes.
- + Addition of crosswalks at key intersections.



4-7 YEARS



It is recommended that the following improvements be undertaken:

- + Significant shortening of left turn lanes on Speen Street as shown above.
- + Creation of continuous five-foot-wide bicycle lanes along most of Speen Street between Hartford Street and Route 135.
- + Provision of sharrows on segments of Speen Street where intersection left turn lanes are required.

- + Provision of sharrows on narrower segment of Speen Street from Route 135 to Sherborn town line.
- + Addition of crosswalks at key intersections.



A two-way shared use path could also be considered for this portion of Speen Street. The path would be subject to caveats similar to those described for Route 135. Given the existing curb to curb dimensions, the path would have to replace the sidewalk on one side of Speen Street unless it is developed on private property as part of future redevelopment projects. A sidewalk could remain in place on the opposite side.



IMPLEMENT THE TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE PLANNING STUDY.

As described in Chapter 3, the Town of Natick and the City of Framingham recently published The Golden Triangle Planning Study. This study addresses land use, planning, transportation and infrastructure issues in The Golden Triangle. This area, which straddles Framingham and Natick, is generally bordered by Route 126 to the northwest, Interstate 90 to the north, the Cochituate Rail Trail and Lake Cochituate to the east, and Route 9 to the south.

The Golden Triangle is a critical economic generator for Framingham, Natick, and surrounding towns, and it provides important jobs and shopping opportunities. However, it is also a major generator of traffic, and its large blocks concentrate traffic on its limited network of very wide roadways. This results in a highly-congested roadway network and an environment that is very unfriendly for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Golden Triangle Planning Study evaluated potential future transportation demand resulting from land use growth assumptions of 10 percent and 20 percent, along with recommendations for potential transportation improvements that would accommodate the traffic growth, make the area more appealing for development, and enhance access in all modes, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The following transportation recommendations from the Golden Triangle Planning Study should be further studied and evaluated, prior to implementation:

- + **Aspirational Connections and Open Space Framework Plan:** The Golden Triangle Planning Study recommends breaking up many of the large blocks in the study area by building new, multimodal Complete Streets and non-motorized connections, as shown on the diagram on page 4.71.
- + **Commuter Shuttle:** A shuttle system from the MBTA Natick Center Commuter Rail Station into and through The Golden Triangle. The shuttle would serve both Commuter Rail passengers and other residents, employees, and visitors wanting to move around The Triangle.

LEAD

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

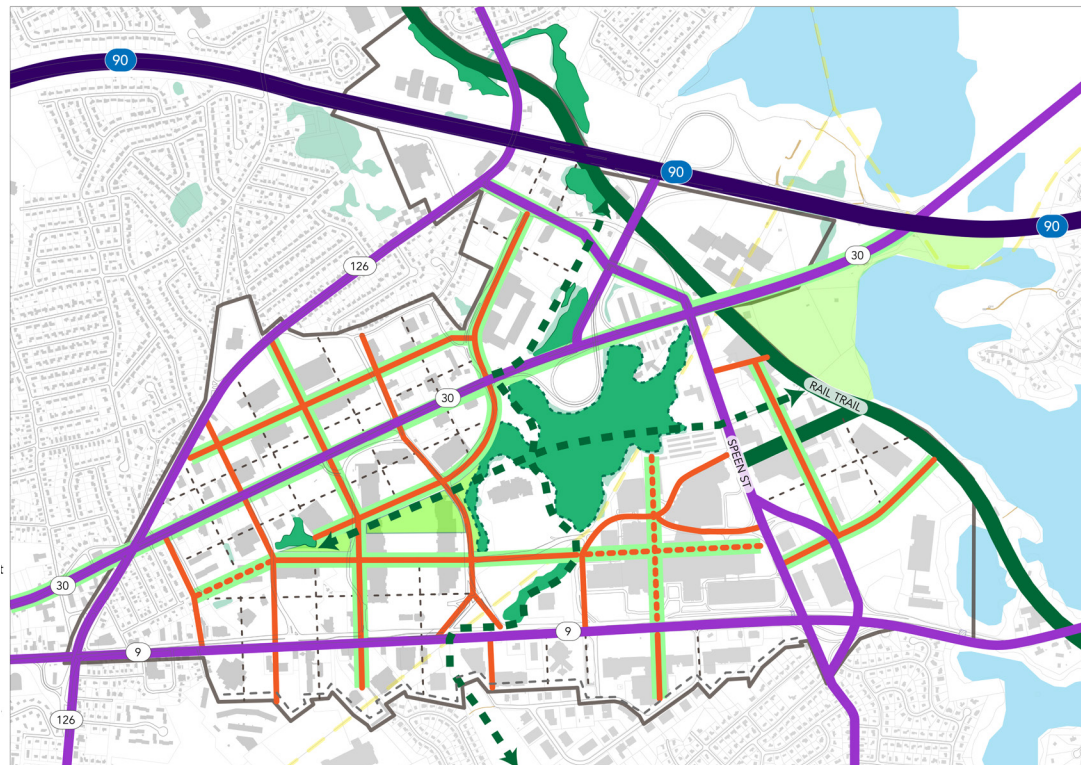
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LEGEND

	Golden Triangle
	Municipal Boundary
	Primary Street
	Secondary Street
	Green Street
	New Greenway
	Future Street
	New Green Space
	Future Internal Street
	Wetland Perimeter Path



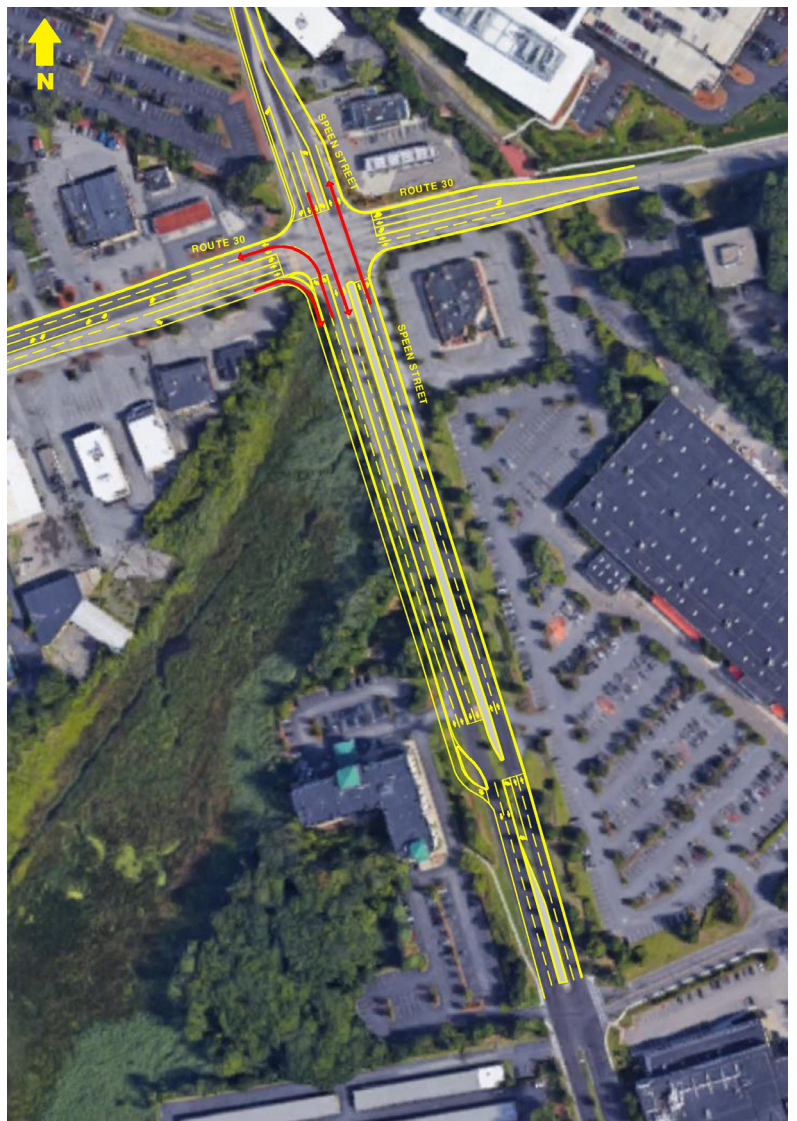
Golden Triangle Planning Study Connections & Open Space Framework Plan

The following transportation recommendations from The Golden Triangle Planning Study should be further studied and evaluated, before implementation:

- + **Displaced Left Turn at Speen Street/Route 30 Intersection:** A significant traffic access and congestion issue in The Golden Triangle is access between Speen Street and I-90. In the afternoon peak period, traffic bound from the Speen Street corridor to I-90 typically overwhelms the double-left turn from Speen Street onto Route 30. The recommended “displaced left turn” would displace those left turns from Speen Street northbound to the outside of Speen Street southbound. This would enable these turns to operate concurrently with Speen Street through traffic, and remove the left turn conflict, a major source of traffic congestion at this intersection. This proposal is shown on page 4.72.
- + **MassPike Exit 13 Interchange Redesign:** This proposal would address the Speen Street/Route 30 congestion issue by adding new ramps directly from Speen Street to the I-90 on- and off-ramps. This would reduce the demand for turning movements at the Speen Street/Route 30 intersection and reduce traffic congestion.

These two recommendations are ambitious because they will require coordination with MassDOT and the City of Framingham (as well as private property owners for the Exit 13 redesign) and MassDOT funding. The designs represent significant changes to existing traffic operations and will require more detailed study. The recommendations are important because the changes offer relief to the existing traffic congestion that will continue to inhibit desired redevelopment in The Golden Triangle.

- + **Natick should continue to work with Framingham on coordinated improvements to the Route 30/Route 9/Spenn Street circulation pattern; consideration should be given to the long-term possibility of a loop pattern of traffic.**



Proposed displaced left turn at the Spenn Street/Route 30 intersection.



REVIEW THE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK THROUGHOUT NATICK AND DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENT PLANS TO BE IMPLEMENTED OVER TIME.

LEAD

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

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TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Natick currently has a very limited bicycle network, as well as many roadways with sidewalks missing from one or both sides. The Town of Natick recently completed a town-wide Pedestrian Accessibility Study that evaluates the condition of sidewalks throughout Natick and recommends a five-year sidewalk improvement plan. **The recommendations from that plan should be implemented. Natick also should undertake a study to determine where additional sidewalks are needed to provide safe pedestrian access to destinations including schools, parks, commercial centers and other destinations.**



The Town of Natick also should consider undertaking a town-wide bicycle transportation plan to build upon the recommendations included in this plan. As part of that plan, the Town should consider developing preferred design standards for pedestrian and bicycle facilities to be used in varying conditions (e.g., traffic conditions, location of utilities, width of right of way, potential for off-road facilities, adjacency to key destinations, etc.).



ENCOURAGE INCREASED USE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT THROUGH IMPROVED MBTA COMMUTER RAIL STATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND PARKING OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVED LOCAL MWRTA PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE.

LEAD

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Access to the Natick Center MBTA station will be improved by Natick’s ongoing projects – Route 27 North, Route 27 South, and the Cochituate Rail Trail – which will improve traffic operations as well as pedestrian and bicycle access to Natick Center and the commuter rail station. In addition, MassDOT is planning accessibility and station improvements at the Natick Center MBTA Station. Several of the improvements proposed in Recommendation 2.1, notably the Route 135/Route 27 intersection improvements and Route 135 corridor improvements, would also improve motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle access to Natick Center. **The pedestrian improvements from Recommendation 2.1 should be implemented.**





EVALUATE PARKING SUPPLY, PARKING DEMAND, AND OPTIONS FOR PARKING MANAGEMENT THROUGH A DOWNTOWN PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN.

For residents, visitors, shoppers, and commuter rail riders who drive to Natick Center, parking is a critical challenge. Most of the on-street and off-street parking near Natick Center is limited to two-hour parking or to retail customers in order to support the Natick Center businesses and local institutions, such as the library and Town government.



The Town should consider undertaking a comprehensive parking study, updated periodically, which could entail the following elements:

1. Parking Inventory

- + Inventory of parking supply for Natick Center within about 1/3 to 1/2 mile of the commuter rail station
- + Inventory supply for short and long-term daytime weekday parking for public facilities.
- + Identify and analyze elements such as regulations, permits, enforcement period, special use restrictions (such as handicap spaces, Zipcar use, and loading zones).
- + Review compliance with parking ordinances, payment methods, and price, when applicable.
- + Develop database and GIS-based mapping of all parking supply in study area.

2. Parking Utilization

- + Field surveys of parking utilization for all study area parking.
- + Parking occupancy counts taken periodically (every 1-2 hours) over the course of a typical weekday will provide a time series of typical parking demand in different zones at different times of day.

3. Parking Supply and Demand Analysis

- + Establish the parking supply.
- + Analyze peak daily parking accumulation, daily parking utilization, and patterns of high or low usage.
- + Identify factors that could increase or decrease parking supply or demand, such as new development, loss of businesses in Natick Center, and increased use of TNCs (Transportation Network Companies such as Uber). With the advent of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs), it is expected that the cost of vehicular travel will drop, making it “cheaper” to the user. This could make travel by TNCs a more attractive alternative to single-occupancy-vehicle

(SOV) travel, and perhaps to public transportation, cycling or walking. From a parking perspective, some argue that CAVs will create more efficient parking by allowing these vehicles to drop-off passengers and continue to off-site parking, thereby reducing the need for accessible parking and thus reducing cost. In contrast, some fear that the anticipated convenience of CAVs will induce additional vehicular trips, with these vehicles circulating or traveling long distances to avoid parking costs, increasing the external costs of crashes and emissions. Either way, demand for large supplies of parking proximate to dense activity centers is anticipated to drop.

4. *Parking Management*

- + Review existing pricing, evaluate parking pricing options, and conduct a sensitivity analysis of parking revenue.
- + Evaluate construction cost for new parking supply, financing options, and capacity of parking revenue to support project financing.
- + Review potential options for parking management, including separate management of on-street and off-street parking, joint management by the Town of Natick, or joint management of all parking by a separate parking authority or outside parking management company.
- + Consider implementation of a residential parking sticker program that would allow residents to park on any residential-only street across Town. The sticker could also be used to allow resident-only parking at heavily used open space resources such as Dug Pond.



METRIC

A COMPREHENSIVE PARKING STUDY HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN AND IS BEING UPDATED EVERY FIVE YEARS.












ON-GOING












The Town should implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Parking Study.

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Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Improve safety in all travel modes through the implementation of a Complete Streets design approach, roadway and intersection improvements, and proven safety counter-measures.</p>	<p>R1.1: Employ a Complete Street Design Approach</p>	<p>Continue to implement the Complete Streets policies into all roadway improvement projects.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Open Space & Recreation Economic Development</p>
	<p>R1.2: Implement Proven Safety Countermeasures</p>	<p>Consider these measures as potential design elements that should be evaluated for inclusion in all roadway improvement projects, as appropriate to the project context.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Open Space & Recreation Economic Development</p>
<p>Goal 2: Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by improving multi-modal access, including vehicular access, public transit, walking, bicycling and ride-sharing.</p>	<p>R2.1: Reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by managing traffic bottlenecks, improving connectivity of the roadway network, and upgrading intersection design and traffic controls.</p>	<p>Look for opportunities to create connections between dead ends and cul-de-sacs and highlight dead ends that could be connected over time, either by roadway or pedestrian/ bicycle connection.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation Historic & Cultural Resources</p>
		<p>Study and/or implement improvement recommendations for the following intersections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route 135/Route 27 • Route 135/Speen Street • Route 135/Mill Street • Hartford Street/Bishop Street • Pleasant Street/Union Street/Route 16 • Walnut Street/Bacon Street/Chestnut Street • Pine Street/Oak Street/Erie Drive 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		<p>Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation Historic & Cultural Resources</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R2.2: Encourage walking and bicycling as modes of travel and exercise through improved pedestrian access and environment, an expanded pedestrian and bicycle network, and improved pedestrian and bicycle safety.	Incorporate bicycle lanes and sidewalks on Route 135 and Route 27. 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		 Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation
		Incorporate bicycle lanes and improve crosswalks on Speen Street north of Route 135. 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Open Space & Recreation
	R2.3: Implement the transportation recommendations from The Golden Triangle Planning Study.	Further study and implement the following recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections and Open Space Framework • Commuter Shuttle • Displaced Left Turn at Speen Street/Route 30 Intersection • MassPike Exit 13 Interchange Redesign  	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee City of Framingham MassDOT	7-12+ YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Housing
		Continue to work with Framingham on coordinated improvements to the Route 30/Route 9/Speen Street circulation pattern. 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee City of Framingham MassDOT	7-12+ YEARS		Land Use Economic Development Housing

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
							
	R2.4: Review the pedestrian and bicycle network throughout Natick and develop comprehensive improvement plans to be implemented over time.	Implement the recommendations from the Pedestrian Accessibility Study. 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
		Consider undertaking a town-wide bicycle transportation plan. 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
	R2.5: Encourage increased use of public transit through improved MBTA commuter rail station infrastructure and parking opportunities and improved local MVRTA public transit service. 	Implement the pedestrian improvements from Recommendation 2.1.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		Economic Development
	R2.6: Evaluate parking supply, parking demand, and options for parking management through a downtown parking management plan. 	Undertake a comprehensive parking and parking management study.	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS	Comprehensive Parking Study has been undertaken and is being updated every 5 years.	Land Use Economic Development
		Implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Parking Study. 	Public Works Department	Community & Economic Development Department Transportation Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development

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5. Economic Development

KEY FINDINGS

- + Natick's primary employment industries are professional and technical services, healthcare, education, and retail services.
- + Nearly 15 percent of Natick's resident labor force works in Natick, and 14 percent works in Boston.
- + Natick's unemployment rate is 3.4 percent, which is 1.5 percent lower than Massachusetts.
- + The median household income in Natick is \$98,902, more than \$30,000 higher than the median for Massachusetts. These high earnings can translate to local spending power for Natick businesses.

Introduction

Like many communities in Massachusetts, Natick's local economy has changed substantially over the last two hundred years. In the 1830's, Natick was home to a booming shoe production industry that spurred several associated businesses which fed off the success of shoe production. When the railroad came through Natick in 1835, it stimulated business and industry, and centralized Natick's commercial and industrial area. To assist with shoe production, the Natick Box and Board Company began supplying boxes for shipping shoes and goods produced at the local tannery on Summer Street. A new shop owned by J.D. Macewen began manufacturing large wagons used to ship shoes and boots made in Natick, and the O. Woods & Company developed large wooden crates that held up to forty boxes of shoes for long-distance shipping. This cottage industry was greatly facilitated in 1858 by the invention of the sewing machine. This sped up the manufacturing of shoes until its peak in about 1880 when Natick was third in the nation in shoe production. By 1928, demand had dropped substantially, followed by the closing of the last shoe company in 1971.

Natick was also famous for producing baseballs. The famous figure eight stitching method for baseballs was developed in Natick, which quickly became one of the primary producers of "league balls" used in the United States and Canada. In the 1920s, Natick had a very successful bottling plant (Bostonia Beverage) which bottled Pepsi Cola and Schweppes soft drinks. Natick also had two small car production facilities and a manufacturer of saws serving several purposes.¹ The Town had significant horticulture industries in the late 19th and early 20th century as well. The suburban development pattern of Natick became a catalyst for the rise of contemporary industry and retail. Nearly all of these legacy industries, like Carling Brewery and the Ford and Chrysler plants west of Speen Street, no longer operate in Natick and have been replaced by new economic drivers that are pushing the Town into the future.

Today, Natick very much reflects the impacts of a more diverse economy that includes businesses relying on state-wide, national, and even international commerce as sources for sustained economic success. The presence of large employers like MathWorks, the Natick Soldier Systems Center, FedEx, and the Natick Mall speak to the success of Natick's local economy and the ability to attract both customers and employees from a range of geographies. Economic development, which supports a changing and improving local economy, is not only the physical manifestation of built space in Natick; improvement of economic conditions benefit the residents and the Town.

In Massachusetts, the reliance of local governments on property taxes for operating revenue necessitates a thoughtful and focused approach when it comes to decisions regarding the support and/or expansion of a town's commercial tax base. In general, commercial and industrial uses tend to be less service-intensive to support,

¹ Historical information on Natick's economy cited from the Natick Historical Society. www.natickhistoricalsociety.org.

and generally result in revenue positive outcomes for the Town. That said, local economic conditions in Natick are the result of factors that influence the decision of a business to locate in Natick or in another community. These decisions may be based on the local labor force, tax structure, infrastructure, housing stock, availability and quality of utilities, the local school system, and what amenities the Town offers to potential employees. This section of the Master Plan provides a snapshot of Natick’s economy today, and how the Town compares to other geographies.

Existing Conditions

Background

The Economic Development component of the Master Plan includes several comparison geographies to benchmark Natick in terms of economic progress, and to look for competitive advantages with nearby communities. At the municipal level, Natick is compared to Framingham, Marlborough, Needham, Newton, Southborough, and Westborough which all have their own unique local economies and are also part of the larger economic region spanning from Route 128 to I-495 along the Massachusetts Turnpike.² To put Natick in a regional context, comparisons are also made to the Framingham New England City and Town Area (NECTA)³ which is a geography used to aggregate detailed quarterly Employment and Wage (ES-202) data. Comparisons are also made across data for the State of Massachusetts, which helps to place Natick within larger state-wide trends.

Labor Force

Natick’s labor force is comprised of 19,881 residents over the age of sixteen who are currently employed or actively seeking employment.⁴ For most of the suburban towns in the Greater Boston region, labor force participation rates tend to be high. Natick is no exception with a 73 percent participation rate for residents over the age of sixteen. By contrast, the labor force participation rate for the State is 65 percent.⁵

2 Comparison communities were provided to the consultant team by Natick staff.

3 The Framingham NECTA is comprised of Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Mendon, Milford, Natick, Southborough, and Sudbury.

4 Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Labor Force and Unemployment Data, Annual 2015 Report.

5 ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, B23001.

GEOGRAPHY	LABOR FORCE	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Natick	19,881	19,201	680	3.4
Framingham	39,229	37,757	1,472	3.8
Marlborough	23,202	22,233	969	4.2
Needham	15,125	14,616	509	3.4
Newton	46,041	44,320	1,721	3.7
Southborough	5,284	5,098	186	3.5
Massachusetts	3,574,567	3,397,942	176,617	4.9

TABLE 5.1: LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Labor Force and Unemployment Data, Annual 2015 Report.

Labor Force Characteristics

Natick’s high labor force participation rate reflects the composition and wealth of its households and educational attainment of residents. Natick is comprised of approximately 14,000 households, of which 63 percent are family households and 53 percent are married-couple households. Of the married-couple households in Natick, 28 percent have children under the age of eighteen.⁶ These characteristics tend to align with higher income households, and are very similar to the household composition of the comparison communities.

Education also correlates with income, and Natick residents over the age of twenty-five are well-educated. The 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates show 66 percent of Natick residents have earned a Bachelor’s Degree or higher compared to only 40 percent state-wide.⁷ Almost all the comparison communities have residents with very similar education levels. Together, the household composition and education attainment characteristics in Natick are helping to drive higher household incomes. While median household income in Natick is more than \$30,000 higher than that of Massachusetts, many of the surrounding communities have median incomes that exceed Natick’s. It so happens that most of the municipalities surrounding Natick are consistently in the top ten to twenty highest earners in Massachusetts when looking at median household income.

GEOGRAPHY	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
Natick	\$98,902
Framingham	\$68,881
Marlborough	\$71,424
Needham	\$129,154
Newton	\$118,639
Southborough	\$149,375
Massachusetts	\$67,846

TABLE 5.2. MEDIAN HH INCOME, 2010-2014
 Source: ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, DP03.

Labor Force by Industry

Although Natick is located about twenty miles west of Downtown Boston, it is still very much impacted by the industrial mix and employment patterns of the regional economy. Changes in the Greater Boston regional economy, coupled with the characteristics of Natick’s labor force, are reflected in the types of jobs held by Natick residents. Nearly 60 percent of employed residents have jobs in the educational services and health care sectors, the professional and technical services sectors, or the finance, insurance, and real estate sectors.⁸ The employment pattern is very similar to those of the comparison communities, particularly the alignment of the labor force in educational services, health care, and professional and technical services. Both Natick and Framingham have a relatively large number of residents employed in the retail sector, which is not surprising given the presence of large retail clusters along Route 9. Natick has a relatively small number of residents employed in the agriculture, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing industries, which further reflects its highly professional, white-collar workforce. These industry sector trends mirror what is occurring in the larger region and across the state.

⁶ ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, S1101.

⁷ ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, B15003.

⁸ ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, DP03.

INDUSTRY SECTOR	NATICK	FRAMINGHAM	MARLBOROUGH	NEWTON
Agriculture, forestry, mining	0.30%	0.20%	0.20%	0.10%
Construction	3.40%	5.40%	6.10%	2.10%
Manufacturing	7.00%	6.30%	13.40%	6.20%
Wholesale trade	2.10%	2.50%	2.60%	1.60%
Retail trade	9.00%	14.50%	13.10%	7.30%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	2.50%	1.90%	3.00%	1.20%
Information	4.00%	2.30%	3.50%	2.50%
Finance, insurance, real estate	9.60%	6.80%	5.20%	9.60%
Professional and technical services	19.20%	17.70%	18.20%	19.60%
Education, health care, social services	28.70%	24.20%	17.70%	36.40%
Arts, entertainment, accommodations	6.30%	9.00%	8.20%	7.20%
Other services	3.30%	6.30%	6.00%	3.50%
Public administration	4.70%	2.80%	2.70%	2.80%
INDUSTRY SECTOR				
	NEEDHAM	SOUTHBOROUGH	MASSACHUSETTS	
Agriculture, forestry, mining	0.20%	0.30%	0.40%	
Construction	2.20%	2.90%	5.40%	
Manufacturing	6.00%	11.50%	9.20%	
Wholesale trade	2.50%	3.80%	2.40%	
Retail trade	7.20%	10.40%	10.80%	
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	1.70%	2.30%	3.60%	
Information	2.70%	3.90%	2.40%	
Finance, insurance, real estate	12.90%	10.80%	7.60%	
Professional and technical services	21.10%	24.10%	13.10%	
Education, health care, social services	32.20%	22.90%	27.90%	
Arts, entertainment, accommodations	5.00%	2.70%	8.60%	
Other services	4.20%	2.80%	4.40%	
Public administration	2.00%	1.70%	4.10%	

TABLE 5.3: LABOR FORCE BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

Source: ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, DP03.

Unemployment

Over the last ten years, unemployment in Natick has cycled with the state and national economy. Unemployment rates were low leading up to the so-called “Great Recession” of 2008-2009, climbed between 2008 and 2010, and then began to drop to a low of 2.5 percent in 2016. Massachusetts as a state was not hit nearly as hard as other states by the economic impacts of the Great Recession, therefore cities and towns with stronger local economies were able to weather the downturn and quickly rebound. Natick’s unemployment rate (3.4 percent) in 2016 was equal to or below most of the surrounding communities, and 1.5 percent below Massachusetts (4.9 percent).⁹

⁹ MA EOLWD, Labor Force and Unemployment Data, 2006-2016.

Labor Force Commuting Patterns

According to data from the U.S. Census, businesses in Natick employed just over 22,000 people in 2014. Of Natick's total workforce, 11.4 percent is comprised of Natick residents, meaning 88.6 percent of employees working in Natick are coming from another city or town. One might find this statistic to be surprising, but it is common among Natick's peer communities. Businesses in Framingham and Newton, which both have large workforces, only have about 10 to 11 percent of their respective workforces comprised of local residents. As a point of comparison, Cambridge businesses draw about 12 percent of their workforce from local residents, and Boston businesses draw about 27 percent from local residents.¹⁰

As of 2014, approximately 14.8 percent of Natick residents in the labor force were employed by businesses in Natick. Interestingly, almost the same number of Natick residents commute to Boston for employment (14.3 percent). The remaining 70.9 percent of Natick residents commute to jobs in communities located within the I-495 belt, with the exception of residents headed to Worcester (1.5 percent). Natick's location along Route 9 and the MassPike can be viewed as both a positive and a negative depending on perspective. While major regional roadways (and many smaller roadways feeding into them) are heavily congested during peak travel periods, they do provide vehicular access to and from Natick for all commuters. Access to Natick via these regional roadways is also valued by employers looking to locate close to major transportation routes for a variety of reasons. Natick is also fortunate to have two MBTA Commuter Rail stations providing links to major employment centers in Boston, Framingham, and Newton, which are all in the top ten employment destinations for Natick residents.¹¹

Available estimates from the ACS indicate that 77 percent of Natick residents are driving alone to work each day, while 8.6 percent are utilizing some form of public transportation. Only 1.6 percent of Natick residents are walking to work each day, and even fewer are utilizing a bike.¹² These figures are very similar to the comparison communities with the exception of Newton, whose residents are utilizing public transit options at a higher rate because they are more readily accessible than in Natick. When compared to Massachusetts, Natick residents tend to drive more, walk less, and do not utilize public transportation options as much. This is not surprising considering how many Natick residents work outside of town, many in destinations not easily accessible by walking, biking, or public transportation.

10 U.S. Census, On the Map, 2014.

11 Ibid.

12 ACS Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, B08101.

13 Ibid.

14 Natick requires any person or corporation conducting business under any title other than the complete real name of the owner to register. Registration is good for up to four years, and is accompanied by a \$50.00 filing fee paid to the Town.

Data from the ACS show that 5.5 percent (1,025) of Natick's employed residents worked from home. While these figures are estimates from the Census, they probably underestimate the number of employed residents working from home.¹³ As telecommuting and flex scheduling have become more commonplace among the "amenity" packages offered to employees, many more people have the option to work from home for at least some portion of the work week. For some, working at home is a part-time component of employment and for others it may represent their full-time job. Others may be operating a full-time business in a home office or studio.¹⁴

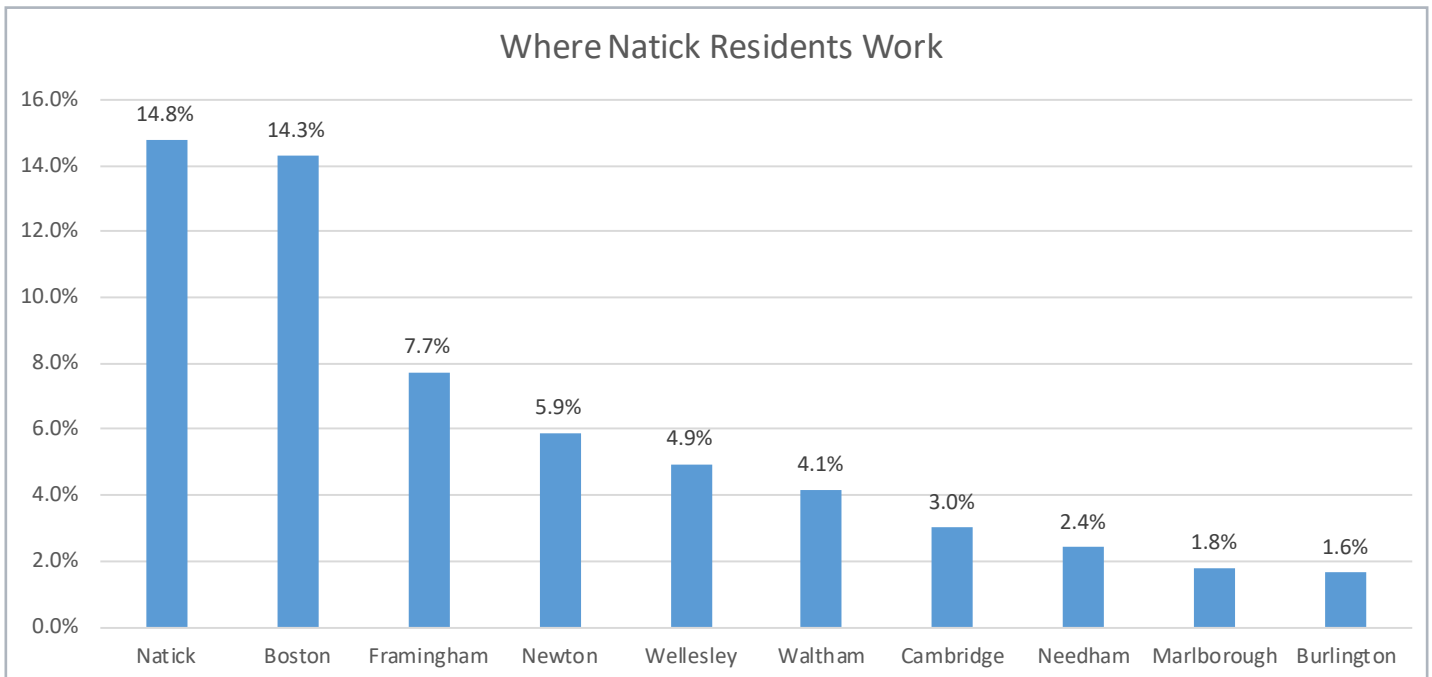


FIGURE 5.1: PLACE OF WORK BY CITY OR TOWN FOR NATICK RESIDENTS

Employment and Wages

According to data from the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, (EOLWD) Natick has 1,495 employer establishments and an employment base of about 22,900.¹⁵ Looking back over the last five years, the number of business establishments in Natick has remained nearly unchanged, and total employment declined by about 4 percent. The slight drop in employment could be the result of some of the larger employers in Natick ramping up or down depending on the market and product demand. Natick’s local economy is anchored by a substantial retail employment base, which can see swings in employment numbers based on projected retail sales and seasonal employment.

The data from EOLWD and the ES-202¹⁶ forms do not always capture the full extent of what is occurring in the local economy. This data set does not always include self-employed individuals, independent insurance and real estate agents working solely on commission, students in work-study jobs, most railroad workers, unpaid volunteers or family workers, members of the military, services performed for religious organizations, and employees of farm or non-farm employers with a total payroll or employee count that falls below the minimum thresholds required for unemployment insurance coverage under state law. Data from ESRI’s Business Analyst¹⁷ suggests local employment establishments may number closer to 2,100, and the work force in Natick may be as high as 27,000.¹⁸ The differential in the number of establishments and total employment between these two data sources speaks to the potential local entrepreneurial activity of small businesses and independent contractors who are working in and running businesses in Natick, but may not have enough employees on payroll to be captured in the ES-202 data set.

Table 5.4 shows the top twenty employers in Natick ranked in order by number of employees. The Natick Mall and the Morse Hospital are significant economic drivers in Natick, not only based on how many people they employ but also the support they provide for other employers in related businesses. For example, the presence of the hospital is also promoting the co-location of ambulance services and several rehabilitation facilities in Natick that may have otherwise located elsewhere. In the coming years, the on-going expansion of MathWorks will likely move the company into the second spot with the anticipated addition of up to 1,600 new employees.

15 MA EOLWD, ES-202.

16 ES-202 employment and wage data are derived from reports filed by all employers subject to unemployment compensation laws. Data is produced quarterly and annually for the state, labor market areas, workforce development areas, cities, towns, and counties.

17 ESRI is an internationally renowned data vendor of socioeconomic and market data.

18 ESRI Business Analyst, 2016.

EMPLOYER	ESTIMATED EMPLOYEES	BUSINESS TYPE
Natick Mall (all stores)	3,555	Retail & Dining
MathWorks Inc.	2,600	Software Development
Leonard Morse Hospital	2,500	Medical & Surgical Hospital
Solider Systems Center	1,600	Research & Development
American Medical Response	600	Ambulance Service
Mary Ann Morse Healthcare	401	Rehabilitation Hospital
Cognex Corporation	400	Instrument Manufacturing
Roche Brothers	300	Supermarket
Bernardi's Honda Inc.	225	Automotive Sales
Longfellow Sports Club	200	Golf Club
Whitney Place Assisted Living	200	Assisted Living
Natick Visiting Nurses Association	190	Home Health Care
Beaumont Rehabilitation Center	180	Rehabilitation Hospital
Mercedes-Benz of Natick	160	Automotive Sales
Crowne Plaza-Boston/Natick	150	Hotel
Eliot Healthcare Center	130	Rehabilitation Hospital
Middlesex Savings Bank	125	Bank
Walnut Hill School	120	Private School
Brigham-Gill Chrysler Jeep	100	Automotive Sales
Stop & Shop Supermarket	100	Supermarket
Total Employment	12,636	

TABLE 5.4: TOP 20 EMPLOYERS BY SIZE, 2016

Source: Town of Natick, ESRI, InfoGroup, 2016.

Changes in Employment by Industry Sector

19

One of the challenges with employment data for Natick is the suppression of professional, scientific, and management services jobs due to the large employment base of MathWorks. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) suppresses data in communities where one employer comprises a bulk of the employment base in one particular industry sector to protect data confidentiality. In Natick, there are about three thousand jobs that are not accounted for in the breakdown of industry sectors, but are counted in the Town's total employment base number. It is highly likely that employment in the professional, management, and administrative service sectors is higher than reported given MathWorks' estimated 2,600 employees.

20

US Census, On the Map, 2014.

Employment data going back to 2005 suggests that Natick's economy has been relatively stable. Even during the Great Recession, Natick's employment base remained relatively unchanged. Table 5.5 shows the changes in Natick's employment by industry sector. The local economy saw more noticeable gains in the number of employees in the professional and technical services sector, educational services sector, and accommodation and food services sector.¹⁹ Natick's retail sector employs the largest number of workers, and is closely followed by businesses in the professional and technical services sectors. It is likely that employment in the professional and technical services sector will continue to grow in Natick, especially with the on-going expansion of MathWorks.

Natick is a net importer of jobs. Industry sectors that rely on bringing in employees from outside Natick include retail trade, information, health care, and accommodations and food service. As of 2014, retailers in Natick were filling close to 4,000 jobs with workers who live in other communities.²⁰ As incomes, educational attainment, and housing prices continue to rise in Natick, it is likely that more service sector jobs will be filled by workers who reside outside of the town.

INDUSTRY SECTOR	2010	2016	% CHANGE
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	0	0	-
21 - Mining	0	0	-
23 - Construction	458	628	37%
31-33 - Manufacturing	197	178	-10%
22 - Utilities	0	0	-
42 - Wholesale Trade	1,433	501	-65%
44-45 - Retail Trade	6,157	5,614	-9%
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	147	196	33%
51 - Information	0	0	-
52 - Finance and Insurance	398	361	-9%
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	318	200	-37%
54 - Professional and Technical Services	2,755	2,947	7%
55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	199	-
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	1,164	1,321	13%
61 - Educational Services	1,322	1,859	41%
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	3,077	2,911	-5%
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	400	424	6%
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	1,849	1,935	5%
81 - Other Services, Ex. Public Admin.	752	650	-14%
92 - Public Administration	0	0	-
Total, All Industries	23,777	22,897	-4%

TABLE 5.5: CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT 2010-20

Source: MA EOLWD, ES-202, 2010 and 2016.



Sherwood Plaza Retail Center



Natick Mall

Wages

Between 2010 and 2016 annual wages in Natick grew by 4 percent. The highest wage increases over this period occurred in the finance and insurance, professional and technical services, and real estate sectors. Wages in Natick increased at a lower rate than both the NECTA and State (9 percent and 19 percent, respectively).²¹ The industry sectors that saw the highest gains in wages in Natick were also very similar to gains seen at the NECTA- and state-level. Table 5.6 shows the changes in average annual wages by industry sector in Natick between 2010 and 2016.

INDUSTRY SECTOR	2010	2016	% CHANGE
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	\$0	\$0	-
21 - Mining	\$0	\$0	-
23 - Construction	\$1,065	\$1,264	19%
31-33 - Manufacturing	\$1,356	\$1,193	-12%
22 - Utilities	\$0	\$0	-
42 - Wholesale Trade	\$3,174	\$2,147	-32%
44-45 - Retail Trade	\$522	\$599	15%
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	\$854	\$503	-41%
51 - Information	\$0	\$0	-
52 - Finance and Insurance	\$1,406	\$2,302	64%
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$1,117	\$1,359	22%
54 - Professional and Technical Services	\$1,659	\$1,992	20%
55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$0	\$2,552	-
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	\$576	\$661	15%
61 - Educational Services	\$866	\$877	1%
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	\$900	\$1,016	13%
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$400	\$377	-6%
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	\$406	\$432	6%
81 - Other Services, Ex. Public Admin.	\$596	\$729	22%
92 - Public Administration	\$0	\$0	-
Total, All Industries	\$1,178	\$1,224	4%

TABLE 5.6: CHANGE IN WAGES, 2010-2016

Source: MA EOLWD, ES-202, 2010 and 2016.

Location Quotients

Location quotients compare employment by industry in two or more areas. The quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry's employment in one area to that of the larger comparison area. If the location quotient for a given industry falls between 0.90 and 1.10, the industry's proportion of jobs is virtually equal in both places. A location quotient of less than 0.90 usually identifies an industry that is under-represented in the local economy, and a location quotient of more than 1.10 identifies an industry that makes up a comparatively larger percentage of local employment. For planning purposes, location quotients help to identify concentrations of employment and clusters of industry types, but also indicate industries the Town may want to consider pursuing if it has a competitive advantage compared to other communities.

Figure 5.2 below shows that a few key industries are well represented in Natick's employment base. The presence of the Natick Mall and other retailers along Route 9 gives Natick a high location quotient in the retail industry sector. The Town also has a high concentration of jobs in the professional and technical services industry as well as in the arts and entertainment industry sector. Although the Town has a large percentage of jobs falling within the health care sector, the location quotient is not showing a high concentration when compared to Massachusetts.

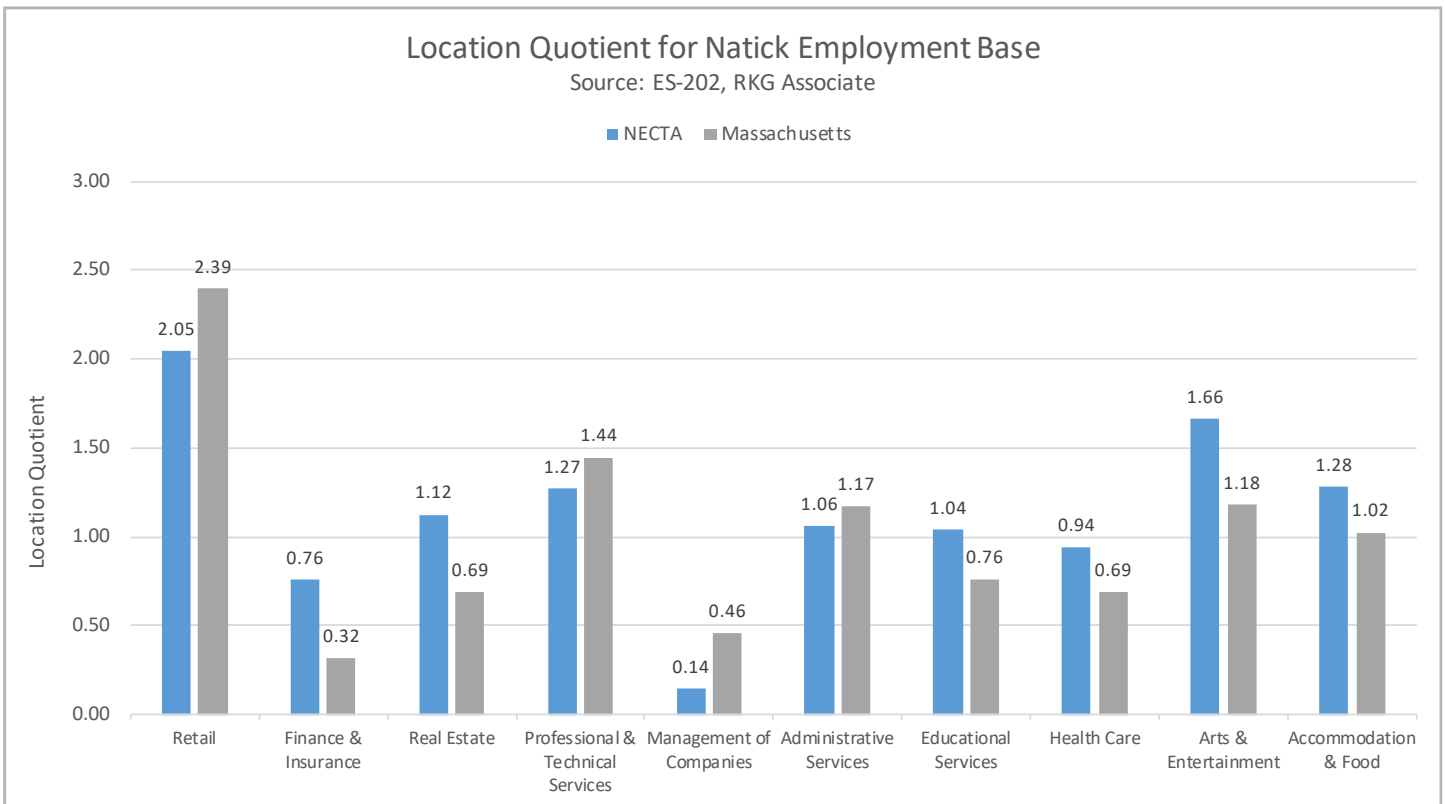


FIGURE 5.2: LOCATION QUOTIENT FOR INDUSTRY SECTOR

“Commercial and industrial development generates just under \$21 million in tax revenue for Natick.”

Commercial and Industrial Development

Natick has a series of commercial and industrial clusters concentrated in different parts of town. These range from very dense clusters of retail development, to industrial and research and development (R&D), to mixed-use walkable town and neighborhood centers. The diversity of businesses, retail stores, and restaurants provides Natick residents, employees, and visitors with a wide range of experiences and choices. These clusters tend to be located along primary transportation corridors like Route 9, Route 27, and Route 135, with the exception of South Natick Center which is much smaller in scale and primarily serves the local neighborhoods of South Natick. Map 5.1 shows commercial development parcels across Natick. Clusters of blue dots indicate locations of key commercial corridors and nodes in Town.

Commercial and industrial uses in Natick operate on just over 715 acres of land, or about 7 percent of the total Town gross land area.²² The land utilized for commercial and industrial uses currently holds just under 12.3 million leasable square feet, or 14,000 square feet per acre of land.²³ Commercial and industrial development in Natick has a total assessed value of \$1.55 billion and generates just under \$21 million in tax revenue on an annual basis. Natick generates 20 percent of annual property tax receipts from commercial and industrial development, with 78 percent generated by residential property taxes.²⁴ The remaining 2 percent is generated by personal property taxes from industrial property. Table 5.7 compares tax rate and tax base trends in Natick and the comparison communities for Fiscal Year 2017.

GEOGRAPHY	FY17 TAX RATES		TAX BASE RES. %	% CHANGE FY07-FY17	AVERAGE SF VALUE	% CHANGE FY07-FY17
	RESIDENTIAL	C/I/P				
Natick	13.49	13.49	78%	-2%	\$529,607	7.3%
Framingham	16.71	36.52	59%	-1%	\$367,321	-4.6%
Marlborough	15.32	26.41	55%	1%	\$322,503	N/A
Needham	11.89	23.63	76%	-4%	\$843,913	23.7%
Newton	11.12	21.27	82%	-2%	\$1,020,302	24.6%
Southborough	16.38	16.38	81%	-2%	\$577,456	-0.3%

TABLE 5.7: TAX RATE AND TAX BASE TRENDS

Source: MA Dept. of Revenue, RKG Associates.

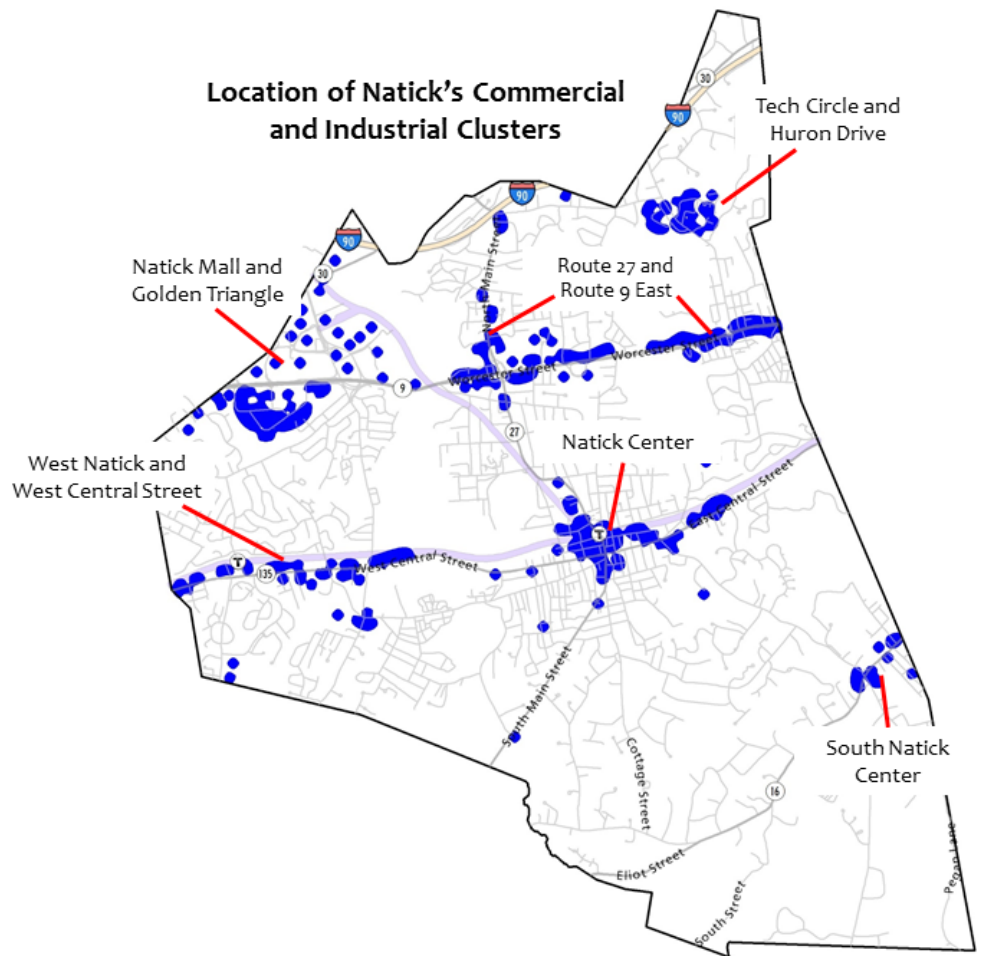
Retail Development

Natick has a substantial amount of retail development that supports both local demand as well as drawing patrons from across the region and beyond. The Golden Triangle, anchored by the Natick Mall, is the largest concentration of retail development in Natick. It includes Sherwood Plaza and Shopper’s World (in Framingham) in addition to the Mall. Route 9, to the east of Route 27, also has a number of retail stores and restaurants which tend to be located on single parcels or in small strip centers with the exception of the Natick 9 and 27 Center. This area is unique due to the coordinated development and review practice that takes place between staff and boards in Natick and Framingham. A similar development pattern is found along Route 135 west of Speen Street continuing into Framingham. This corridor in Natick and Framingham also provides access to a substantial number of rental apartments and condominiums on the south side of Route 135.

²² Natick Assessor’s Database, 2016.

²³ CoStar and RKG Associates, 2016. This represents a floor area ratio, or FAR, of approximately 0.3.

²⁴ Massachusetts Department of Revenue, RKG Associates.



MAP 5.1: NATICK'S COMMERCIAL NODES

Blue dots show the location of parcels labeled as commercial development by the Natick Assessor's Office.

Source: Town of Natick, RKG Associates



Nouvelle at the Natick Mall.



MathWorks New Lakeside Campus Under Construction.

The two other commercial centers in Natick, South Natick Center and Natick Center, are very different in scale, design, and function. These centers are more walkable and tend to have more locally-owned small businesses than Route 9 and Route 135. The diversity of commercial areas in Natick provides a wide range of shopping and dining options for Natick residents.

Within Natick, there is approximately 5.1 million square feet of retail space. Retail vacancy in Natick is quite low with only 4 percent of the space currently listed as vacant.²⁵ Yet, even with low retail vacancy rates, retailers and property managers continue to face challenges with the retail market and the growing presence of online retailers. Some property owners are working towards integrating new uses that complement the retail experience in Natick. The Natick Mall now has the Nouvelle residences, and recently introduced a Wegmans grocery store as an anchor tenant. The integration of mixed-use development in a retail dominated area is also occurring just over the border in Framingham where a new retail and residential development is being proposed at Shoppers World (19 Flutie Pass). The former Sam's Club site is being redeveloped as a 200-unit housing development for residents ages sixty-two and over, as well as a 100-room hotel. New mixed-use development is also finding its way back to Natick Center with the redevelopment of the former American Legion site and the former Hometown Paint and Hardware.

Office and Industrial Development

In addition to a substantial amount of retail square footage, Natick has just over 3 million square feet of office space. The existing office space is a mixture of large office buildings, some housing one or two companies, and small spaces in which professional service firms operate. Similar to the retail market sector, office space in Natick has a very low vacancy rate of 3.5 percent. A majority of the office space in Natick is older, sometimes in need of some renovation, and in less desirable locations which garner lower rents. According to data from CoStar, 96 percent of the office space in Natick falls in the Class B (44 percent) and Class C (52 percent) categories.²⁶ Only 4 percent of all office space in Natick is within Class A, and nearly all of that space is within the MathWorks buildings.²⁷

The largest set of office buildings in Natick is located off Route 9 along Apple Hill Drive where the current MathWorks campus is housed. This campus accounts for about one-third of all the office space in Natick.²⁸ Just across Route 9 from Apple Hill Drive is a second major office location along Vision Drive. This development houses about 230,000 square feet of office space for companies like Cognex and ADP.

There are several clusters of buildings and spaces that offer layouts for small to mid-size companies and small professional offices. Natick Center, for example, has approximately 260,000 square feet of leasable space, much of which is broken up into small offices in stand-alone and mixed-use buildings. Office buildings along Strathmore Road in East Natick include several stand-alone structures with office spaces ranging from 5,000 square feet to 23,000 square feet. There are several other office clusters in Natick catering to small- and mid-size companies. These are located along Speen Street and North Main Street north of Route 9.

25

CoStar, 2016. CoStar is a proprietary data source providing detailed information for commercial and residential real estate markets.

26

Class A, B & C refer to age, condition and construction style of commercial buildings, with Class A generally referring to modern glass and steel construction.

27

CoStar, 2016.

28

Ibid.



Tech Circle in the East Natick Industrial Park



Erie Drive in the East Natick Industrial Park

Industrial Development

Natick has 1.47 million square feet of industrial/flex space on 125 acres of land. Similar to retail and office space, the vacancy rate for industrial space is only 4.5 percent.²⁹ The largest industrial space is occupied by the FedEx facility at 30 Superior Drive, where the company has about 500,000 square feet of space. The remainder of industrial/flex space in Natick is comprised of medium to smaller scale buildings with a median floor plate of about 12,000 square feet. These spaces also tend to be older (median year built was 1960), and 76 percent of buildings fall into the Class C category.

Natick has two distinct industrial parks or areas: East Natick Industrial Park and the Natick Business Park. These industrial areas are very similar in their layout, building stock, and overall appearance. They are composed of one- and two-story buildings that range from 10,000 to 30,000 square feet in size built in the 1960s and early 70s. These buildings tend to house individual companies, many reportedly seeking lower value space in which to start and grow. More recently, some of these spaces have been converting to recreation and daycare uses instead of traditional industrial, flex, and office space for a variety of different reasons.³⁰ The Town recently prepared an economic development strategy that looks specifically at some of these industrial areas and recommends ways to capture and accommodate future business opportunities.

Future Economic Development Opportunities

The Town of Natick has engaged in several planning processes to look forward at potential opportunities throughout the community. In 2011 through 2012, Natick participated in the 495/MetroWest Development Compact project which identified local, regional, and state priority development areas in communities along I-495. This project brought together local, regional, and state partners to determine where communities wanted to target growth in the future, as well as priority locations for open space preservation. Locally, Natick had identified six areas where growth was going to be focused in the future. These included:

- + West Natick Commuter Rail Station
- + Area at the intersection of Route 27 and Route 9
- + The former Paperboard site (now Modera, a 150-unit housing development)
- + Natick Center
- + Speen Street north of Route 9
- + Area at the intersection of Oak Street and Route 9
- + East Natick Industrial Park

29

CoStar, 2016.

30

Reasons mentioned during in-person interviews with Town staff, brokers, and economic development organizations included not enough flexibility in the zoning, space was not fitted out for certain businesses, lack of amenities for employees, and some businesses needed more space to grow than what was currently available.

Coming out of this process, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) utilized a site screening process to determine that the Paperboard site and Natick Center met the criteria for regional priority development areas, while the State determined Natick Center was the only area to meet the state-level criteria. Priority areas that are designated as significant at the regional and state level are given some prioritization for planning, open space and park grants, as well as infrastructure funding, through state and Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process.



Natick Center Cultural District Sign

Natick Center Plan

In early 2016, the Town (in partnership with MAPC) completed a vision plan for Natick Center that incorporated a robust public process to determine the desired future of the Center and recommendations for improving economic development, zoning, transportation, and parking. The overall vision for Natick Center as presented by MAPC is to “create a place where people can live, work, shop, eat, and recreate in a walkable downtown setting. When complete, Natick Center will be accessible by multiple means of transportation (walking, biking, transit, and car), and parking will be well-managed and efficient to navigate.” To achieve this vision, the Plan offers several recommendations which include but are not limited to:

- + Support the improvement of existing buildings and local businesses.
- + Ensure that permitting and procedures are business friendly.
- + Expand the Mixed-Use and Housing Overlay Option Program districts.
- + Modify dimensional and parking requirements for new development in the Mixed-Use district.
- + Continue to make Natick affordable and accessible.
- + Install traffic calming measures to make walking and biking safer and easier.
- + Assess the impact of recent parking changes such as new meters, and consider piloting a reverse-angle parking strategy where appropriate.

Economic Development Study

In December 2016, Natick completed an Economic Development Study and Action Plan. This process was managed by Natick Center Associates with assistance from Town staff and their consultant Investment Consulting Associates (ICA). The scope for this project was to complete a demographic and economic profile of Natick, assess the Town’s strengths and weaknesses when it comes to supporting and recruiting businesses, and recommend strategies the Town could undertake to increase the retention and recruitment of businesses. The strategy also focused in on the East Natick Industrial Park and the Natick Business Park, two smaller industrial areas that are struggling to define their identity.

The results of ICA’s work identified opportunities for the Town to pursue and recruit businesses from the following five employment sectors to help bolster the local economy³¹:

- + **Financial Services (Customer Service & IT):** Financial services include activities related to banking, securities, capital markets, insurance, real estate, and their support functions. Operations centers and back office functions include call and customer service centers and information technology.



Leonard Morse Hospital in Natick.
Source: www.AmericanTowns.com

- + Opportunity for Natick: This industry is supporting a heightened demand for quality customer service experiences coming on the heels of the most recent recession. A greater shift to automation in front office roles is creating a new emphasis on streamlining back office functions, which is driving demand for IT and technology functions.
 - + Challenges for Natick: High salary costs related to customer service and IT functions for banks and financial service firms may be difficult to overcome.
- + Healthcare (Care Centers & IT):** Health care includes all acute and long-term care facilities spanning regional and community hospitals, urgent and retail care centers, rehabilitation facilities, and extended care facilities.
- + Opportunity for Natick: Cost, technology, and greater emphasis on personal care are helping to drive demand in this sector. Care is shifting from hospitals to urgent care centers, which are expected to grow 20 percent by 2019. The population is aging and living longer, which is placing increased demand on medical and healthcare services.
 - + Challenges for Natick: High salary costs for healthcare workers may be difficult to overcome. There are other locations within the Boston Metropolitan area where healthcare employment is higher, and access to employees trained for these jobs is more plentiful. Employee attraction is a key component to attracting additional healthcare businesses and jobs.
- + Entrepreneurship (Early Stage):** Entrepreneurship is the process of developing, launching and operating a new business, such as a startup company.
- + Opportunity for Natick: Entrepreneurial activity continues to increase. It is estimated that 12 percent of working age Americans are engaged in entrepreneurial activity.
 - + Challenges for Natick: The lack of physical space in Natick to grow and retain startup companies. The Town currently lacks an organized effort to develop an entrepreneur and startup ecosystem. This includes physical space, training and programs, and connections to academic institutions.
- + Food Services (Restaurants, Cafes, & Groceries):** Food services span all businesses that sell food items for immediate or home consumption, including restaurants, cafes, and groceries.
- + Opportunity for Natick: People are placing greater emphasis on health, social impact, experience, safety and transparency when making choices about what food to purchase and consume. There are opportunities in Natick to bring in locally-sourced, health-conscious food businesses.
 - + Challenges for Natick: Access to public transportation, parking, and congested roadways create challenges for existing and future food service establishments. Natick also has a slower, and more difficult permitting process which can delay or deter these types of businesses from entering the market. Water and sewer costs have also been noted as a challenge in Natick.

- + **Life Sciences (R&D, Medical IT):** Life sciences encompass companies in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and medical technology. Functions across the value chain³² include R&D, manufacturing, commercialization, and distribution.
 - + **Opportunity for Natick:** The industry faces dual demands of demonstrating market value by increasing innovation while minimizing costs in the face of rising price pressures. This is placing pressure on companies to develop stronger IT units focused on updates and upgrades, and creating new advancements to cloud technology and analytics. Estimates show IT spending in the Life Science sector to increase to \$54 billion by 2019.
 - + **Challenges for Natick:** The key challenge for Natick is to attract some base companies within the life sciences sector to cultivate and attract an industry cluster.

Where are the opportunities to create a mix of uses to support vibrant nodes of activity in Natick?

Is that something residents and businesses are looking for?

In addition to analyzing Natick's attractiveness for different industry sectors, the Economic Development Study also put forward recommendations for changes in marketing tactics, networking opportunities, improvements to local zoning and permitting, and infrastructure investments that will support future economic growth. The Town and the Economic Development Committee are currently evaluating the recommendations and determining the next steps for implementation.

Issues and Opportunities

The issues and opportunities described in this section were derived from conversations with Natick residents at the November 2016 Community Meeting, discussions with Town staff and business and property owners, previous plans and studies, and research.

Diversifying Commercial Nodes

Natick has several commercial and industrial nodes across town that have been established for decades. Traditionally, these have been reserved for commercial and industrial uses. As the overall marketplace and space needs of businesses have changed, it has caused municipalities and developers to think more about a mix of uses and a more creative use of physical space. This evolution is prominently displayed in and around the Natick Mall. The integration of multi-family housing shows the demand for living in an environment where amenities and services are located within a short distance, and the location of the new Wegmans is bringing in a full-service grocer to serve as an anchor to a traditional indoor shopping mall.

Going forward, the Town may want to think beyond the traditional commercial node or center and consider how a multitude of uses could create more synergistic nodes that would be more attractive to today's employers. Recommendations from the Natick Center plan included increasing opportunities for mixed-use where housing could be located above retail or office space. This concept is already being implemented in several locations in Natick Center, and is anticipated to continue as additional properties come up for redevelopment. The Town may also want to consider encouraging food services and restaurants in the industrial parks as an added amenity for employees. Currently, options are extremely limited and employees must drive to restaurants or food vendors. Opening options for food establishments in the industrial parks may help increase the attractiveness of these locations for new businesses or those who may be considering leaving Natick altogether.

32

Value chain refers to the process by which a business receives or produces raw materials and adds value through various processes to create a finished product.

“Natick has a strong economic base in professional and technical services, healthcare, and retail.”

Shifts in the Retail Industry

The retail industry in America is changing. Many large anchor stores and mid-size big box retailers have been slowly losing business to local competitors and to online retailers. While some retailers are less likely to be impacted by the market penetration of online sales, clothing/department stores, book stores, and electronic stores are closing far more rapidly. Given Natick’s large retail presence along Route 9, the Town may want to look at the current zoning and consider alternative uses that could help to fill vacant storefronts if this changing retail environment continues. The Town may also want to look at permitting procedures to see where streamlining could help reduce the amount of time an applicant must wait to change a space or building to fit a new user’s needs.

Attracting and Supporting Businesses

Natick has done a good job of attracting businesses. The Town has a strong economic base in several key employment sectors including professional and technical services, healthcare, and retail. However, there are improvements the Town could make to attract additional businesses and/or diversify the business mix. The recently completed Economic Development Study points to several opportunities for improvement that include³³:

- + Improve coordination between Natick’s economic development program and other municipalities, economic development organizations, and other partners to respond effectively to business inquiries and needs.
- + Review and improve regulatory policies and procedures to more effectively respond to inquiries from both existing businesses and businesses looking to locate in Natick. This should include zoning, permitting, and utilities.
- + Improve marketing and outreach efforts to businesses already in Natick, as well as creating an outward looking face to market and attract to businesses looking for a new location.
- + Invest in the infrastructure and amenities that will attract businesses to Natick and ensure their retention over time. This could include physical infrastructure such as the transportation network and public utilities, but also includes quality schools, open spaces, retail amenities, and housing options.
- + Encourage business retention and expansion, reducing or removing barriers to redevelopment, and making it possible for existing businesses to grow in Natick.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 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.



Having identified Natick's economic challenges, opportunities, and ability to attract and support new development and investment, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for economic development 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. Develop and market Natick as a hub in MetroWest for the incubation and cultivation of 21st century companies.**
- 2. Identify market opportunities in West Natick and South Natick to support additional commercial and mixed-use growth that is appropriately scaled and designed to fit within the context and character of the neighborhood.**
- 3. Support redevelopment opportunities of large-scale and underutilized sites and areas across Natick to strengthen and diversify the Town's employment and tax base.**
- 4. Encourage new and expanding businesses to take advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities near existing transportation infrastructure, public services, and utilities.**

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.



MathWorks Apple Hill Drive Campus

GOAL 1

Develop and market Natick as a hub in MetroWest for the incubation and cultivation of 21st Century companies.

R1.1

DETERMINE LEADERSHIP ROLES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES TO AVOID DUPLICATION AND OVERLAP OF RESOURCES.

LEAD 

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NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

As a broad topic that affects so many aspects of life any city or town, economic development relies upon a wide variety of stakeholders and decision makers to promote and sustain a steady stream of business and economic activity. Towns must focus on promotional activities like marketing and branding, as well as on permitting, incentives, infrastructure, amenities, facilities and services, workforce advancement, and providing friendly service to businesses. With so many focus areas and different entities taking ownership over various components of economic development, it can be easy for key players to become siloed in their own area of expertise.

I-5 YEARS 

In Natick, there are several boards, committees, and staff members working on facets of economic development, and the issue of overlap and responsibilities between them arose several times during the Master Plan process. Going forward, it will be important for the Town to **clearly define the roles of the Economic Development Committee (EDC), Natick Center Associates, and the Natick Board of Selectmen in relation to economic development initiatives, to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the Town's message is consistent.** This will present a unified, singular voice to the business community, and ensure that efforts are coordinated regardless of who is actually responsible for a given action item. **This coordination of efforts also should extend to other organizations involved with economic development, such as the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, to ensure that efforts are complementary, not duplicative.**

I-5 YEARS 

R1.2

IMPROVE THE VISIBILITY AND MARKETING OF NATICK'S ECONOMIC STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

I-5 YEARS 

Once roles are more clearly defined, the Town should focus on **formalizing and strengthening the role of the EDC to have a strong leadership role on economic development issues, and to act on opportunities.** This group can serve as an apolitical entity that can interact with businesses, court new investors,

LEAD 

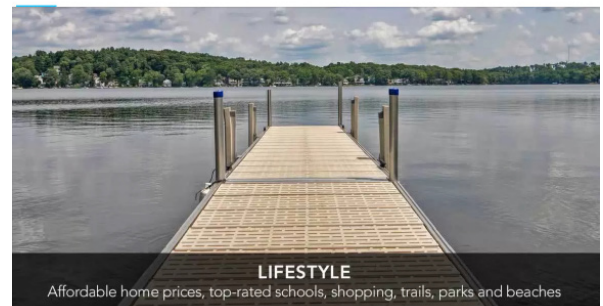
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

SUPPORT 

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The City of Marlborough's Economic Development Website is an example of marketing done by other communities.

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

 **1-5 YEARS** 

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PLANNING BOARD

 **1-5 YEARS** 

 **1-5 YEARS** 

R1.3

LEAD 

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

SUPPORT 

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
PLANNING BOARD
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

 **ON-GOING** 

promote the Town more actively, and work internally and externally to communicate a consistent message about the value of investing in Natick.

Moving forward, it will be valuable to **hold joint meetings of the Board of Selectmen and the EDC to ensure that a cohesive vision and goals are aligned and that there is a clear delineation of responsibilities.**

In addition to working on internal communication and division of responsibilities for economic development tasks, there must also be a concerted effort to market Natick to outside businesses and investors. **The Town should continue to develop and refine marketing tools for economic development such as its website, brochures, and advertisements in industry sector materials. Consistent branding elements should be used in marketing materials, wayfinding signage, and other promotional communications.**

With the pricing of commercial and industrial real estate increasing the closer one gets to Boston, Natick has an advantage when competing for businesses looking for a secondary market in which to set up shop. Natick’s per square foot prices are lower, and the community offers many attractive amenities like good schools, a walkable downtown, relatively lower housing prices, transportation access, open space, and more. The Town also has redevelopment potential in some of the existing industrial parks, along highway corridors, in The Golden Triangle, and in the downtown. To attract additional investment from outside Natick, **the Town should market itself as a lower-cost hub for smaller-scale industrial spaces and as an incubator of innovative businesses. Examine opportunities on industrial parcels nearest Natick Center and in both Industrial Parks.** These marketing efforts should target industries where Natick has a competitive advantage within the Greater Boston region and enables clustering among existing manufacturing, research, and high tech employers. **The Town should also consider providing funding for staff and/or EDC members to attend industry conferences or events to market Natick as a place to do business.** Getting out and meeting industry executives and leaders will help put a face to Natick and develop personal relationships with companies, brokers, and site selection specialists that may not have considered Natick in the past.

PROVIDE THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO CONTINUE TO GROW NATICK’S PRESENCE IN THE REGION.

In December 2016, the EDC issued the Natick Economic Development Study and Action Plan. The report presented data on Natick’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to attracting businesses, and the regional and national competition the Town faces. The report also included a series of recommendations for how the Town could improve marketing efforts, business attraction and retention, permitting, and zoning changes to encourage/enable new investment to take place. While the focus of this effort was on the two primary industrial parks, there are recommendations that can be applicable town-wide. These recommendations would require the Town to invest staff time and funding in order to see them through. **The EDC should prioritize and implement the recommendations of the Natick Economic Development Study and Action Plan.**

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

I-5 YEARS



A proactive and systematic plan to implement these important recommendations will help the Town bring in new businesses, and ensure a higher rate of business retention.

One important near-term recommendation that could help with permitting, transparency, and creating a business-friendly culture would be to **identify and designate a business ombudsman who can help answer questions, assist with permitting, and communicate across departments and boards to coordinate efforts on behalf of new or existing businesses.** This person could work as staff in the Community and Economic Development Department (CED) or could be a staff person to the EDC. In some cases it may be more effective to have the economic development liaison work outside of town hall, to preserve their ability to speak freely with prospective businesses and brokers. Communities across the Commonwealth choose different ways of designating and funding economic development staff. Whichever Natick chooses, it should be easy for businesses to identify who the relevant contact is and how to get in contact with them.

METRIC

DESIGNATION OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEAD WITHIN TOWN GOVERNMENT.

GOAL 2

Identify market opportunities in West Natick and South Natick to support additional commercial and mixed-use growth that is appropriately scaled and designed to fit within the context and character of the neighborhood.



R2.1

COUPLE ZONING CHANGES WITH INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO INCENTIVIZE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The communities of West Natick and South Natick have the potential to serve as neighborhood-oriented mixed-use centers that can accommodate retail, restaurants, office, residential, and civic uses in a compact walkable environment. While the two centers are very different in scale and character - South Natick having an historic small-town center feel, and West Natick having a more suburban orientation - there are opportunities to create neighborhood centers in each location.

In West Natick, opportunities for larger-scale transit-oriented development are prevalent. Large parcels currently house underutilized one-story buildings and strip retail centers directly across Route 135 from hundreds of residential units and a built-in consumer market. While Route 135 is a major thoroughfare for east/west travel, the area has good secondary roadway access and its own MBTA commuter rail station. In the near term, **the Town should begin conversations with the MBTA to better understand their goals for the West Natick station, and find ways to create a small node of transit-oriented development around the station.** The MBTA has increasingly been willing to work with communities on plans for transit-oriented development on state-owned land. There may be an opportunity

I-5 YEARS



 4-7 YEARS 

to create a public-private partnership for land around the West Natick station. It is likely that any new development opportunities would require some zoning changes. **The Town should begin a process of reviewing and revising current zoning along the Route 135 corridor near West Natick to encourage more walkable and transit-oriented development patterns. The Town should also prioritize transportation improvements in this area that will encourage walking and biking between surrounding neighborhoods, business areas, and the MBTA station.**

 4-7 YEARS 

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 to bring nearby neighbors to the commercial center.

METRIC 

CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN HELD WITH THE MBTA REGARDING INTENSIFYING TOD AROUND THE WEST NATICK STATION.

GOAL 3

Support redevelopment opportunities of large-scale and underutilized sites and areas across Natick to strengthen and diversify the Town’s employment and tax base.

 **R3.1**

REVIEW AND REVISE ZONING TO ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT IN NATICK’S BUSINESS CENTERS.

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

PLANNING BOARD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

One of the challenges with developing or redeveloping in Natick is the zoning restrictions placed on parcels in certain districts. The EDC’s Economic Development Study made this challenge abundantly clear in its zoning audit of the East Natick and Natick Industrial Parks. The current zoning’s dimensional requirements, parking standards, and use restrictions are limiting the ability of these parks to support the expansion of existing buildings needed for growing companies. This has a negative effect on the Town’s ability to retain those Natick businesses that wish to stay and grow. The zoning also places some limitations on the integration of amenities and other uses that would support industrial park workers, such as food vendors, restaurants, coffee shops, or food trucks.

 1-5 YEARS 

The Town should review and revise the current zoning in Natick’s two main industrial parks to encourage their reinvention into more modern, desirable, mixed-use spaces. Consideration should be given to both code and form-based measures to support a variety of potential uses. The zoning should provide a bonus mechanism for projects that create flexible space that can easily be converted to another use as markets and industries change over time.



Natick Industrial Park

Another area in Natick that holds potential for expanding economic growth and job opportunities is The Golden Triangle (the area around the Natick Mall, Cloverleaf Marketplace and Sherwood Plaza). With companies like MathWorks and TJX serving as strong anchor employers, and new retail, housing, grocery, and hotel development taking place, The Triangle is rapidly reinventing itself as a mixed-use district. The recently completed Golden Triangle Planning Study recommended coupling infrastructure improvements that would connect pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists with redevelopment sites. The study recommends that both Natick and neighboring Framingham adjust zoning to allow for a mix of uses and an intensification of development in the core of The Triangle, with transition areas buffering surrounding neighborhoods. The area holds a great deal of potential to house, employ, and serve residents and visitors alike. To enable this new development pattern, **Natick should review and revise the current zoning in The Golden Triangle to encourage new uses, including mixed-use, entertainment, and multi-family housing.**

 **1-5 YEARS** 

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

PLANNING BOARD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES

Natick Center also offers opportunities to enhance and augment the Town’s employment base, by providing smaller, niche office spaces in a mixed-use, amenity-rich environment that offers easy access to the MBTA commuter rail. Natick Center boasts a number of redevelopment opportunities and buildings that could be rehabbed without losing the historic character that makes it unique. More immediate opportunities lie with the industrially-zoned properties on the north side of Natick Center, along Route 27 and Middlesex Avenue. As demand for an expansion of Natick Center grows, **the Town may wish to examine opportunities on these industrial parcels, and to identify uses that are compatible with surrounding properties and consistent with the vision for Natick Center. Many of these parcels are covered by the recently expanded HOOP housing overlay district, which provides the opportunity for housing and/or mixed-use development. There are also opportunities to convert existing industrial uses to less noxious industrial uses, including artist and maker space and other creative businesses.**

4-7 YEARS 



INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES HAVE BEEN REZONED, CONSISTENT WITH THE REST OF NATICK CENTER.



A concept rendering for a portion of The Golden Triangle.



Mixed-use commercial building in Natick Center.

GOAL 4

Encourage new and expanding businesses to take advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities near existing transportation infrastructure, public services, and utilities.



R4.1

WORK TO RETAIN EXISTING BUSINESSES IN NATICK AND ALLOW THEM TO GROW AND THRIVE.

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Natick has several informal business incubator spaces that function as starter locations for companies seeking cheaper space than may be available closer in to Boston. One such example is the Natick Labs campus located off Kansas Street along Lake Cochituate. While much of the research and production on this campus is kept confidential, there have been spin-off companies that have resulted from the work done at Natick Labs. **The Town should take a proactive role in encouraging spin-off companies from Natick Labs, as well as MathWorks, Cognex, Abi Labs, Exponent and other tech firms in Natick’s industrial parks, to occupy and incubate in Natick’s industrial parks. The Town should create pathways of communication between contractors at Natick Labs and property owners in Natick’s industrial parks.**

This recommendation is ambitious because, while the Town can encourage these actions, actual decisions will be made by private companies. The benefit will be an increase in high-paying high tech jobs, an increase in tax revenues, new tenants for commercial/industrial space and new patrons from local businesses.



I-5 YEARS



The Town should also focus efforts on drawing in a more diverse mix of tenants in Natick Center to add vibrancy and curate a 24-hour activity center. There are several property owners who own large multi-tenant buildings in Natick Center who need to be at the table with Town officials to discuss businesses that could fill gaps in the current tenant mix. **The Town should identify and work with local property owners to open the lines of communication and better understand what improvements are needed to help secure a more diverse tenant mix in Natick Center.** The Town currently does this, to some degree, through Natick Center Associates in Natick Center (primarily for retail) and the Economic Development Commission for the remainder of the Town. These efforts should be increased and formalized.



I-5 YEARS



Natick Labs Campus



R4.2

LEAD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SUPPORT

FINANCE COMMITTEE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



4-7 YEARS



4-7 YEARS



7-12+ YEARS



CONTINUE AND STRENGTHEN FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE A DIVERSE TENANT MIX IN NATICK CENTER.

Changing a commercial center’s tenant mix can be challenging. In some cases, existing property owners may have long-term leases with good paying, responsible tenants. There may be little financial or risk incentive for a given property owner to consider leasing to another business when current leases expire. Risk of losing a good tenant, vacancy, and loss of an income stream can be enough of a deterrent that building owners neglect to consider new tenants. Financial assurances and risk management may be ways to persuade building owners to pursue a different path.

If the Town is interested in encouraging and incentivizing a more diverse tenant mix in Natick Center, there are opportunities for using targeted funding programs as a reward for risk-taking businesses and property owners. **First, the Town could consider offering tax incentives to property owners who actively market to, and secure leases from, certain types of businesses that are desired, but not well-represented in Natick Center.** A program like this provides a financial incentive that rewards behavior viewed as positive by the Town. This program may not be necessary for a long period of time; rather, just enough time to encourage a healthy tenant mix and prove to building owners that diversifying is good for everyone in Natick Center.

Another financial incentive the Town could consider would be to **set aside funding that would allow the Town to offer a rent buy-down program for underrepresented but desirable types of businesses in Natick Center.** This program could be used to encourage any number of business types, but would likely be most effective for attracting businesses that are expensive to start or are in high demand and difficult to attract. The City of Taunton has a rent rebate program for their downtown where new businesses are given a break on rent for a set period of time. This helps them establish their presence, provides time for marketing and business start-up, and helps reduce the initial cost burden.

Other, more pro-active, creative incentives that have been adopted by other communities could also be considered. **The Town, potentially in concert with local funders, could consider setting aside funding each year to offer low interest rate loans to new businesses that would allow them to retrofit existing first floor commercial spaces in a more cost-effective manner.** Once a new business has agreed to locate in Natick Center, it faces a multitude of upfront costs before it can open, including investments in tenant fit-out. For restaurant tenants, these fit-out costs can easily run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. A low-interest rate loan program could help businesses secure funding faster and get them producing revenue more quickly.

These three recommendations are ambitious because they would require the Town to set-up, fund and administer loan/grant programs and monitor funding recipients. The benefit is that they provide the opportunity to incent rehabilitation of underutilized ground-floor spaces and bring in desirable uses to help activate and revitalize Natick Center. Examples of similar programs in other locations include Springfield and Taunton, MA; Raleigh, NC and Houston, TX.

METRIC

ESTABLISHMENT OF AT LEAST ONE PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE A DIVERSE MIX OF TENANTS IN NATICK CENTER.

LEAD

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
NATICK CENTER ASSOCIATES
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO ENHANCE NATICK CENTER FOR BUSINESS OWNERS.

Parking in downtowns is often perceived as one of the most difficult challenges communities face. Natick is no different. After interviews with many business owners and employees in Natick Center, parking was one of the most commonly cited challenges. Comments ranged from not enough parking, locations are not convenient, parking regulations are difficult to decipher, and employee parking is not handled well. Patron parking is available in Natick Center, although one may have to walk a block or two to get to their end destination. However, long-term parking for employees is a bit harder to come by. Many employees requested parking for more than four hours, and more of it. Employees are a critical component of successful businesses and **the Town should develop a more robust employee parking plan for Natick Center that provides long-term daily parking in locations that do not take away from parking for business patrons.** *The Town is currently conducting a Parking Garage Feasibility Study. The garage could provide a location for employee parking.*






Natick Center Streetscape








4-7 YEARS

7-12+ YEARS








In addition to improving the tenant mix in Natick Center, **the Town should also continue to invest in the infrastructure to support a walkable, safe, friendly downtown.** Natick is blessed with relatively wide sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and a lovely town green for gathering and events. However, there are some additional improvements the Town could consider such as benches, lighting, street trees, plantings, and bike racks. These improvements will help retain existing businesses, attract new businesses to fill vacancies, and provide an even more pleasant environment for patrons and visitors. The Town could consider dedicating a portion of parking revenues to provide initial funding for this program, although much of the revenue will most likely be used to pay down the construction debt of the garage.





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Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Develop and market Natick as a hub in MetroWest for the incubation and cultivation of 21st century companies.</p>	<p>R1.1: Determine leadership roles on economic development issues to avoid duplication and overlap of resources.</p>	<p>Clearly define the roles of the Economic Development Committee (EDC), Natick Center Associates, and the Natick Board of Selectmen in relation to economic development initiatives, to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the Town's message is consistent.</p> <p>Extend coordination of efforts to other organizations involved with economic development, such as MetroWest Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R1.2: Improve the visibility and marketing of Natick's economic development strengths and opportunities.</p>	<p>Formalize and strengthen the role of the EDC to have a strong leadership role on economic development issues, and act on opportunities.</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Hold joint meetings of the Board of Selectmen and the EDC to ensure that a cohesive vision and goals are aligned and that there is a clear delineation of responsibilities.</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Continue to develop and refine marketing tools for economic development such as its website, brochures, and advertisements in industry sector materials. Consistent branding elements should be used in marketing materials, wayfinding signage, and other promotional communications.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Market the Town as a lower-cost hub for smaller-scale industrial spaces and as an incubator of innovative businesses. Examine opportunities on industrial parcels nearest Natick Center and in both Industrial Parks.</p> 	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Economic Development Committee Planning Board</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Consider providing funding for staff and/or EDC members to attend industry conferences or events to market Natick as a place to do business. 	Community & Economic Development Department 	Economic Development Committee Planning Board 	1-5 YEARS 		Facilities and Services 
	R1.3: Provide the resources necessary to continue to grow Natick's presence in the region.	Prioritize and implement the recommendations of the Natick Economic Development Study and Action Plan. 	Economic Development Committee	Board of Selectmen Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	ON-GOING		Land Use
		Identify and designate a business ombudsman who can help answer questions, assist with permitting, and communicate across departments and boards to coordinate efforts on behalf of new or existing businesses.	Community & Economic Development Department		1-5 YEARS		Facilities and Services
						Designation of an economic development lead within Town government.	
Goal 2: Identify market opportunities in West Natick and South Natick to support additional commercial and mixed-use growth that is appropriately scaled and designed to fit within the context and character of the neighborhood.	R2.1: Couple zoning changes with infrastructure improvements to incentivize economic development.	Hold conversations with the MBTA to better understand their goals for the West Natick station, and find ways to create a small node of transit-oriented development around the station. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board MBTA	1-5 YEARS	Continued discussions have been held with the MBTA regarding intensifying TOD around the West Natick Station.	Transportation Land Use
		Begin a process of reviewing and revising current zoning along the Route 135 corridor near West Natick to encourage more walkable and transit-oriented development patterns.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Prioritize transportation improvements in this area that will encourage walking and biking between surrounding neighborhoods, business areas, and the MBTA station.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use
		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 Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use
Goal 3: Support redevelopment opportunities of large-scale and underutilized sites and areas across Natick to strengthen and diversify the Town's employment and tax base.	R3.1: Review and revise zoning to encourage investment in Natick's Business Centers.	Review and revise the current zoning in Natick's two main industrial parks to encourage their reinvention into more modern, desirable, mixed-use spaces.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Economic Development Committee	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Review and revise the current zoning in the Golden Triangle to encourage new uses, including mixed-use, entertainment, and multi-family housing.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Economic Development Committee	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
		Examine opportunities on these industrial parcels in and around Natick Center, and to identify uses that are compatible with surrounding properties and consistent with the vision for Natick Center.	Community & Economic Development Department	Planning Board Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates	4-7 YEARS	Industrial properties in Natick Center rezoned to be more consistent with the mixed-use, walkable character of downtown.	Land Use

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Goal 4: Encourage new and expanding businesses to take advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities near existing transportation infrastructure, public services, and utilities.	R4.1: Work to retain existing businesses in Natick and allow them to grow and thrive.	Take a proactive role in encouraging spin-off companies from Natick Labs, MathWorks, Cognex, Abi Labs, Exponent and other Natick tech firms to occupy and incubate in Natick's industrial parks. Create pathways of communication between contractors at Natick Labs and property owners in Natick's industrial parks. 	Community & Economic Development Department 	Economic Development Committee 	1-5 YEARS 		
		Identify and work with local property owners to open the lines of communication and better understand what improvements are needed to help secure a more diverse tenant mix in Natick Center. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Economic Development Committee	1-5 YEARS		Land Use
	R4.2: Continue and strengthen funding opportunities to encourage a diverse tenant mix in Natick Center.	Consider offering tax incentives to property owners who actively market to, and secure leases from certain types of businesses that are desired, but not well-represented in Natick Center. 	Board of Selectmen	Finance Committee Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	4-7 YEARS		Land Use
		Set aside funding that would allow the Town to offer a rent buy-down program for underrepresented but desirable types of businesses in Natick Center.	Board of Selectmen	Finance Committee Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	4-7 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
							
		Consider setting aside funding each year to offer low interest rate loans to new businesses that would allow them to retrofit existing first floor commercial spaces in a more cost-effective manner.	Board of Selectmen	Finance Committee Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	7-12+ YEARS		
						Establishment of at least one program to encourage a diverse mix of tenants in Natick Center.	
	R4.3: Invest in infrastructure improvements to enhance Natick Center for business owners.	Develop a more robust employee parking plan for Natick Center that provides long-term daily parking in locations that do not take away from parking for business patrons.	Public Works Department	Board of Selectmen Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	4-7 YEARS		Transportation Land Use
		Continue to invest in the infrastructure to support a walkable, safe, friendly downtown.	Public Works Department	Board of Selectmen Economic Development Committee Natick Center Associates Community & Economic Development Department	7-12+ YEARS		Transportation Land Use

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6: Historic & Cultural Resources

KEY FINDINGS

- + Natick has three local historic districts and 487 historic resources.
- + Only 16.8% of the historic resources are protected by MGL Article 76 which requires review of changes to historic resources.
- + In 2015, Natick had 81 artists, artisans & musical groups; 29 creative cultural enterprises, 42 arts education institutions/enterprises and 7 community cultural organizations, which together are an economic driver bringing visitors to the Town Center.

Introduction

A town's historic, cultural and natural resources are instrumental in establishing the town character, providing an important link to the past, developing an understanding of how the town came to be what it is today, and creating the setting for future development. Throughout the course of Natick 2030+, as well as previous Town planning and visioning efforts, preserving and protecting historic and cultural resources was mentioned repeatedly in conversations with residents and other stakeholders. People were particularly concerned with the demolition and replacement of historic buildings with larger buildings out of character with the surrounding built environment.

Natick's history is described in Chapter 1: Introduction and in Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning, as it relates to development patterns.

Natick is rich in recreational, cultural and educational resources. The varying landscape and cultural activities act not only as a resource for residents, but also surrounding communities. As Natick looks to grow in the future, improving recreational and cultural resources will be important to attract the young professionals and families who participate in the knowledge economy. The community is already thinking about the value of recreational and cultural resources. At a recent charrette about Natick Center, participants identified cultural amenities as an asset to capitalize on for future development:

The people of Natick envision downtown Natick as a vibrant and diverse center for arts, commerce, and cultural resources. The vision includes preservation of the historical character of the downtown, affordability for residents and local businesses and accessibility to the Center through a wide range of transportation options.¹

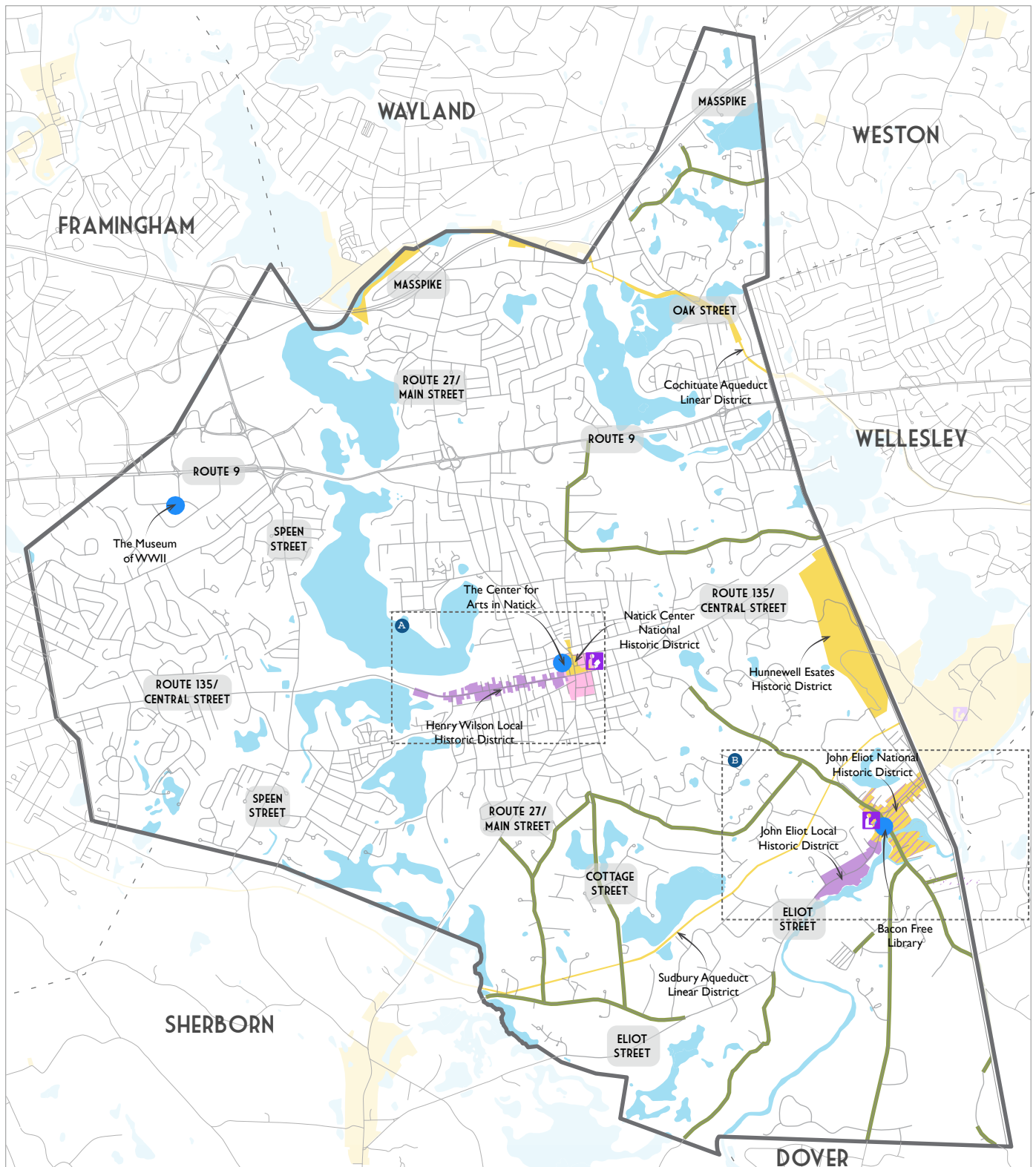
Existing Conditions

Historic Resources

Natick has a wealth of historic resources, including three historic districts and 487 buildings, bridges, aqueducts, monuments and burial grounds listed on the The Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS) inventory (see Maps 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). The following is a summary of the Massachusetts Historic Commission's 1980 *Reconnaissance Survey Town Report* which describes resources remaining from the historic periods:

- + **Contact Period (1500 - 1620):** Native trails around South Natick.
- + **First Settlement Period (1620 1675):** Native trails around South Natick.

¹ Natick 360: Our Community Yesterday and Today.



MAP 6.1: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- LEGEND**
- Local Historic District
 - National Register Historic District
 - Local & National Historic District
 - Natick Cultural District
 - Water
 - Cultural Point of Interest
 - Scenic Road
 - Library



- + **Colonial Period (1676 - 1776):** Two extremely rare houses near South Natick.
- + **Federal Period (1775 - 1830):** Village buildings in South Natick; Henry Wilson Shoe Shop.
- + **Early Industrial Period (1830 - 1870):** In Natick Center, residential development occurred on subdivisions northeast of North Main Street and North Avenue, and south of Central Street in the vicinity of Sherman, Plain, South Main and Cottage Streets. Residential buildings include Greek Revival style and simple side hall houses (West Central, Pleasant and Union Streets) and a large number of side hall cottages (Cottage, South Main and surrounding streets). Subsequent styles represented include Italianate, Second Empire and Victorian Gothic, with occasional rows of workers' houses scattered at Natick Center and South Natick. Institutional buildings include a Gothic Revival chapel (1862) at South Natick and industrial buildings include three-story wooden-frame factory buildings located along the railroad bed at Natick Center; most have been altered, although the baseball factory (ca. 1858) remains largely intact, and is the best example of its period. Buildings suitable for adaptive reuse have, for the most part, been rehabilitated for the new uses. The remaining industrial buildings are primarily one story and appear to have very limited reuse potential.
- + **Late Industrial Period (1870 - 1915):** Residential buildings include a Queen Anne-style house on Leach Lane, several Colonial Revival and Queen Anne-style houses (in Walnut Hill) and one altered Victorian Gothic-style house (Pleasant Street). Major public buildings of the period include the Victorian Gothic Morse Institute and the transitional Victorian Gothic/Queen Anne Bacon Library in South Natick (ca. 1880), scattered schoolhouses and one firehouse (early 1870s) at Natick Center (now TCAN). At least two Victorian Gothic-style, brick churches were built in Natick Center during this period. Natick Center is exceptionally rich in brick commercial blocks of Second Empire, Italianate, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles built after the fire of 1874; commercial building elsewhere appears to be limited to two wood-frame commercial blocks (ca. 1890-1915) at South Natick. Industrial buildings include a small number of brick factory buildings along the railroad bed at Natick Center and several reinforced concrete factories (ca. 1910-25) along North Main and East Central Streets. Buildings suitable for adaptive reuse have, for the most part, been rehabilitated for the new uses. The remaining industrial buildings are one story and appear to have very limited reuse potential.
- + **Early Modern Period (1915 - 1940):** Residential buildings include mostly modest examples of bungalow and Colonial Revival-style houses. Institutional uses include school buildings of various styles throughout town.

The MACRIS inventory is summarized below. Approximately 70% of the listed resources are houses. Construction dates of all of the historic buildings range from 1696 to 1954:

- + Two of the buildings are from the 1600s
- + 6% are from the 1700s
- + 70% are from the 1800s
- + 24% are from the 1900s



Photo of the Isaac Felch House.



Photo of the Sawin Homestead.



Photos from the John Eliot National Register Historic District.

The identified buildings are clustered in the three Historic Districts described below, as well as north along North and South Main Street and in the area between Route 9 and West Central Avenue. There are several areas of town that have not yet been inventoried, including the residential neighborhood south of the Town Center, and South Natick by the Charles River, as well as older residential neighborhood scattered around Town.

Two houses on the MACRIS inventory that are particularly at risk and have been the subject of recent preservation discussions include:

- + The Isaac Felch House at the northeast corner of Bacon and North Main Streets. In 2015 the Town considered relocating the house to allow for intersection improvements but determined that the relocation was not cost effective.
- + The Sawin Homestead on South Street, within Mass Audubon's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary. 2017 Fall Annual Town Meeting authorized the Town to acquire the building. Options explored to preserve this house include preserving the structure in place or relocating it.

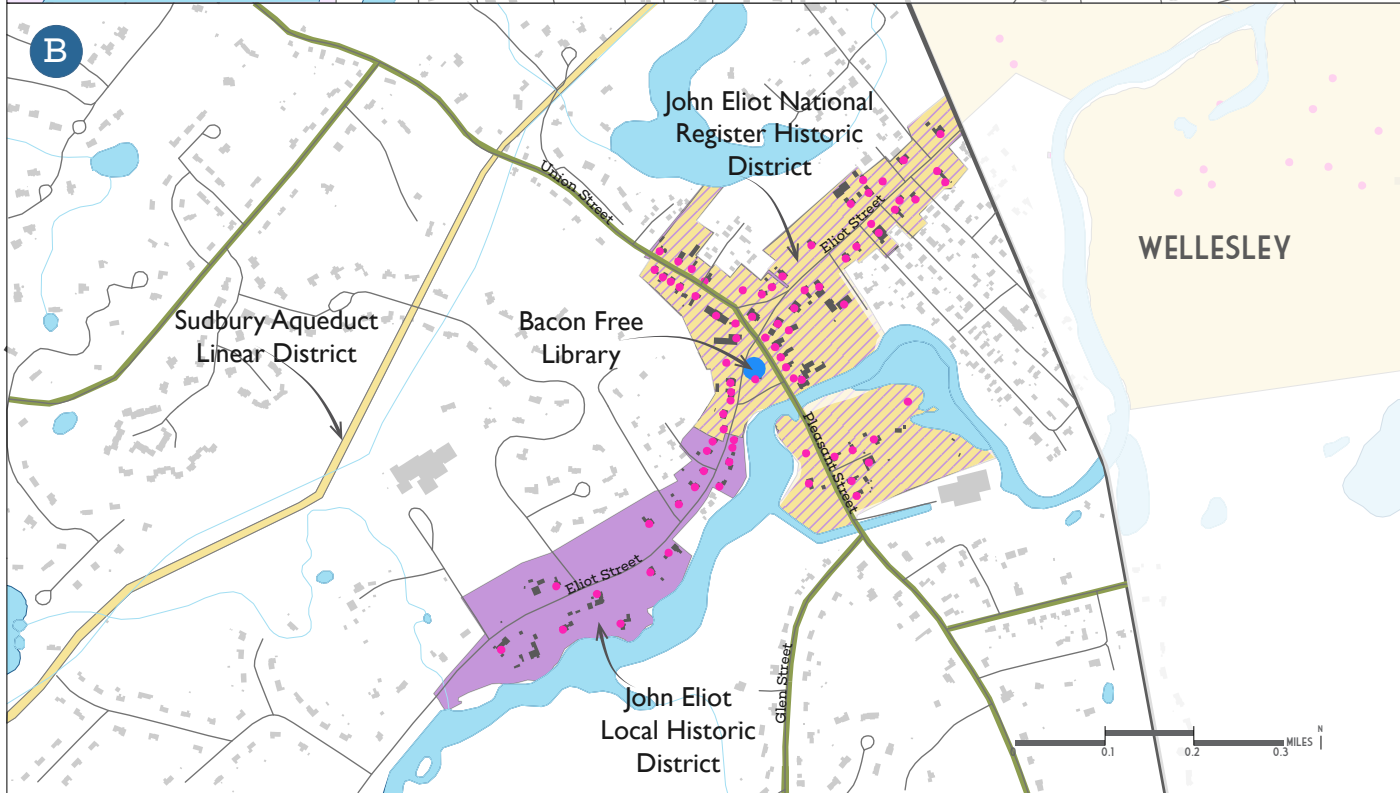
Historic Districts

Natick has three local historic districts (see Maps 1 and 2); two of them are National Register Districts. The three districts are protected by regulations of the Historic District Commission as described later in this chapter.

- + The John Eliot National Register Historic District encompasses much of the area of South Natick along Union and Pleasant Streets, and Eliot Street from just west of Mill Street east to the Wellesley town line. The John Eliot Local Historic District extends further west along Eliot Street to just west of Riverbend Drive. This district encompasses the earliest settlement in Natick.
- + The Henry Wilson Local Historic District extends along West Central Street from just west of Main Street to Fiske Pond and primarily includes residential buildings.



Photos from the Henry Wilson Local Historic District.



MAP 6.2: HISTORIC DISTRICTS

- LEGEND**
- Local Historic District
 - National Register Historic District
 - Local & National Historic District
 - Natick Cultural District
 - Water
 - Historic Inventoried Area
 - Cultural Point of Interest
 - Historic Inventoried Property
 - Scenic Road

- + The Natick Center National Register and Local Historic District encompasses the area along North Main Street north of Central Street to just north of North Avenue. [Because most of the Natick Center buildings were constructed after the 1874 fire,] the consistent quality of buildings (Gothic and Romanesque) provides harmonious style, scale, color and texture, possessing a unity and beauty which may be identified with as the roots of Natick's development. Source: Massachusetts Historic Commission Survey form.



Photos from the Natick Center National Register and Local Historic District.

Historic districts listed on National and/or State Registers, but without Natick Local Historic District status, include:

- + The Sudbury Aqueduct Linear District (on both the State and National Registers)
- + Sacred Heart Church Complex (included in the John Eliot National Register Historic District)
- + The Cochituate Aqueduct Linear District (on the State Register)
- + Hunnewell Estates (on the State Register)
- + Clark Houses (on the State Register)

The following districts were included in the MACRIS Inventory, but currently have no local, state or federal designation:

- + Natick Research and Development Labs
- + Natick Speen Street Army National Guard Facility
- + The Natick Common
- + Lake Cochituate Reservoir
- + Cochituate Utility Buildings
- + Walnut Hill School



Historic Buildings

Public Buildings

The following Natick Town and federal buildings are listed on the historic inventory:

- + The original Morse Institute Library building was dedicated on December 25, 1873, less than two weeks before the fire that burned all of downtown. The library escaped with minor damage.
- + The Bacon Free Library in South Natick, home to the Natural and Historical Society Museum (1880)
- + The Natick Center Post Office (1937)
- + South Natick Fire Station (date not available)
- + Johnson Elementary School (1949)
- + Former Coolidge Junior High School, now used by the Natick Housing Authority (1926)
- + The historic Central Fire Station on Summer Street, built in 1875, was converted into The Center for Arts in Natick (TCAN) in 2003.



From the top: Photos of the Morse Institute Library, the Bacon Free Library, the Natick Post Office, the South Natick Fire Station and the Johnson Elementary School.



Churches

Natick has five historic churches still operating as churches. Historic churches in the Town Center include:

- + First Congregational Church (1875)
- + St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1920)
- + St. Patrick's Church (1892-1902) - the complex includes several buildings which are currently vacant and comprise the site of a proposed mixed-use development. The redevelopment proposal does not include the church.
- + The Universalist Church (1890) is now the Annunciation Orthodox Church

Historic Churches in South Natick include:

- + Eliot Church (1828)



At left, from the top: Photos of the Former Coolidge Junior High School, the former Central Fire Station (now TCAN), the First Congregational Church and the Eliot Church.

Clockwise, from above: St. Patrick's Church, St. Paul's Church and the former Universalist Church.



Former Churches

Natick has three historic churches which have been converted to other uses or are permitted for conversion to another use.

- + The former Natick Episcopal Church on Wilson Street in Natick Center (Victorian Gothic – no year given) has been converted to residential use
- + Sacred Heart Church (1873) on Eliot Street in south Natick is vacant and is permitted for conversion to residential use.
- + The Eliot Federated Church of South Natick (1862) has been converted for use by the Riverbend School.



Historic Objects

Historic objects on the MA Historic Commission inventory include:

- + Civil War Soldiers Memorial (1868) on the Town Common
- + Spanish War Memorial (1926) on the Town Common
- + Wilson Memorial Tree Monument (tree planted in 1912) on the Town Common
- + Statue of the Blessed mother at Sacred Heart Church (date unavailable)
- + Natick – Boston Milestone (1750) on Hartford Street
- + Natick Research and Development Building #71 Flag Pole on Fourth Ave. (1954)



From the top: Photos of the former Natick Episcopal Church, the Sacred Heart Church and the former Eliot Federated Church.



Clockwise from above: Photos of the Civil War Memorial, the Spanish War Memorial and the Wilson Memorial Tree Monument.





Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

Historic burial grounds and cemeteries include:

- + Indian Burial Ground on Union Street in South Natick (1731)
- + Indian Cemetery on Pond Street west of Natick Center (1750)
- + North Natick Cemetery on North Main Street (1758)
- + Boden Lane Cemetery in West Natick (1815)
- + Ullrich Family Monument in South Natick (1961)



The Town of Natick commissioned two subsequent surveys of historic resources (in 2008 and 2012) with the following specific project goals:

- + *“To conduct an intensive survey of Natick using the MHC survey methodology and inventory forms.*
- + *To identify contexts for National Register evaluation and to apply the National Register criteria to all resources identified in the survey.*
- + *To submit to the Town a list of individual properties and/or districts that are recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.*



The results of (these) survey(s) will assist the Town’s long-range preservation and growth management planning. The documents will be used to proactively control potential loss or destruction of historic resources through expansion of the Town’s inventory; expand adjacent historic districts to include newly surveyed properties; identify potential new districts; and expand the Town’s Design Review Committee Authority.²

From the top: Photos of the Indian Burial Ground sign, the Indian Burial Ground Marker and the entrance to the Boden Lane Cemetery.

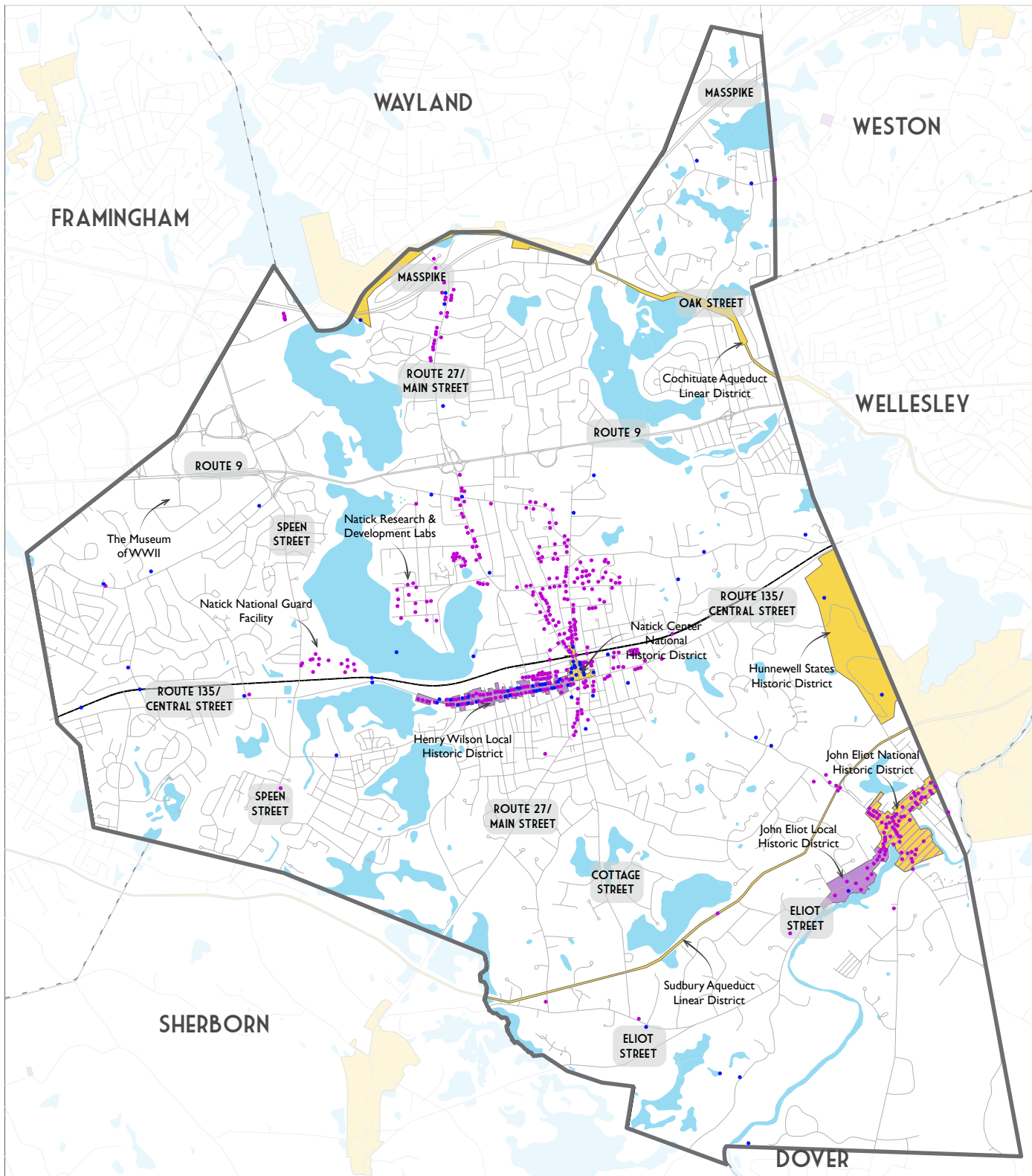
The surveyed properties have been included in the MACRIS Inventory described previously. Recommendations from both surveys include:

Recommendations for Additional Preservation Planning Work: The Town’s education community, including the Historical Society, Public Library and the public schools, should be encouraged to develop historic preservation education materials and programs for the Town’s school system, utilizing the results of this survey. The Town of Natick could also utilize the results of this survey in interpretive programs to increase awareness of Natick’s historical and cultural assets. Interpretive programs could include the sponsorship of walking tours; the publication of brochures and books on the community’s architectural history and development; the establishment of displays in public buildings; and on site interpretation of historic buildings, structures, and sites with the existing marker program.

In addition future preservation planning should consider the establishment of local historic districts and appropriate protection mechanisms that would protect the identified historic resources that preserve and enhance the aspects of Natick’s heritage from demolition, loss of integrity, and decay.³

2 Historic and Cultural Resources Survey of Natick, Massachusetts, ttl-architects, August 2008.

3 Historic and Cultural Resources Survey of Natick, Massachusetts, ttl-architects, October 2012.



LEGEND

- Article 76 Designation
- No Article 76 Designation
- Local Historic District
- National Register Historic District
- Local & National Historic District
- Water

MAP 6.3: HISTORIC RESOURCES FROM THE MA CULTURAL RESOURCES INFORMATION SYSTEM (MACRIS)



The 2008 survey focused on Natick Center and considered all properties constructed up to 1967. Recommendations in addition to those described above include:

- + Expanding the Natick Center Historic District to include resources on South Avenue, Adams Street and a portion of Washington Avenue. This recommendation has not been implemented.
- + Expanding the John Eliot National Register Historic District to include resources further north on Union Street. This recommendation has not been implemented.
- + Further evaluation of properties along Grove Street, Charles Street and Walnut Street not included in the survey to determine the boundaries of a potential historic district. Additional properties in that area were part of the 2012 Survey described later and have been added to the MHC Inventory; no National Register District has been established.
- + Listing the United States Post Office on Common Street on the National Register. This recommendation has not been implemented.
- + The survey also included the following recommendation for additional preservation planning work: *The Side Hall Greek Revival and Italianate cottages along a portion of North Main Street (116 North Main Street – 160 North Main Street – included in the 2012 survey), the Italian neighborhood in the area around Summer Street and the residential properties at the east end of South Avenue are potential candidates as Neighborhood Conservation Districts. A Neighborhood Conservation District is a group of buildings and their settings that are architecturally and/or historically distinctive and worthy of protection based on their contribution to the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the community. It is expected that the architectural resources in a Neighborhood Conservation District have lost some integrity and that the additional protections afforded by a local historic district are unwarranted. A Neighborhood Conservation District Bylaw is distinguished from a local historic district bylaw or ordinance by numerous categorical exemptions and non-binding advisory reviews. A Neighborhood Conservation District is established through passage of a bylaw or ordinance by majority vote of Town meeting or city council.* This recommendation has not been implemented.

The 2012 survey focused along North Main Street and properties within the Walnut Hill neighborhood including the Walnut School for the Arts. The North Main Street project area contains those resources located near the north end of the Felchville area of Natick at the intersection of Main Street and Bacon Street to the town line with Wayland.

The late 19th and early 20th century development of this area for the most part remains intact with some late 20th century residential infill and commercial development which is located mostly in the area of Route 9.

Continued strip development threatens many of the residential properties and early roadside development along North Main Street, South Main Street, East Central Street, and South Avenue and the entire area remains under continual expansion from suburban development along secondary roads. Additional areas of town have also seen intense suburban development, resulting in some loss of historic resources. Neglect of many residential and multi-unit properties from lack of



investments and regular maintenance has led to deterioration and loss of materials and details in many properties. Demolition of some of these deteriorated properties had occurred within the last several years on South Avenue and North Main Street.⁴

The Survey included the following recommendations:

- + *Creating a Walnut Hill National Register Historic District. Exact boundaries of a potential National Register District within this area remain to be determined as the west side of Beacon Street and Winnemay Street to the south have yet to be surveyed. This recommendation has not been implemented.*
- + *Nominating the John W. Walcott House at 24 Grove Street (1893) for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Architecturally, the property is a well preserved example of an early twentieth century Colonial Revival residence that maintains a high degree of architectural integrity. The property is also significant for its association with local business man, John W. Walcott, the owner of the J.W. Walcott Shoe Company and who is credited with inventing the modern baseball. This recommendation has not been implemented.*
- + *Nominating the Henry C. Mulligan House at 7 Highland Street (1905) for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is an example of a well preserved Tudor Revival residence constructed during the early twentieth century and is also significant for its association with Attorney and prominent businessman Henry C. Mulligan who was also very active in the local community. This recommendation has not been implemented.*
- + *Nominating the Gilbert W. Underwood Octagon House (circa 1870) at 23 Walnut Street for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The octagon style is a rare style with no more than a few thousand constructed, mostly in New York, Massachusetts and the Midwest. The residence is locally significant as the only octagonal dwelling in Natick and is one of a few constructed in Middlesex County. This recommendation has not been implemented.*
- + *Nominating the Francis Bigelow House at 52 Walnut Street (circa 1875) for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The house is an example of a well preserved towered Second Empire with associated carriage house and is also significant for its association with businessman Francis Bigelow who formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, John W. Walcott, known as J. W. Walcott and Co. This recommendation has not been implemented.*



From the top: Photos of the John W. Walcott House, the Henry C. Mulligan House, the Gilbert W. Underwood Octagon House and the Francis Bigelow House.



Historic and Cultural Resources Survey of Natick, Massachusetts, ttl-architects, October 2012.

As discussed in Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning, Natick saw significant residential development following World War II and has a number of neighborhoods that were built in styles typical of the 1940s and 1950s (i.e., mid-century neighborhoods). These neighborhoods have not been surveyed, but represent good examples of that period of residential subdivision development. In many cases, these neighborhoods continue to offer more reasonably priced housing options than newer development. There is a concern, however, that neighborhood character is threatened by tear-down activity and new development out of scale or character with existing houses. In other cases, existing homes have been altered significantly and the neighborhood no longer has a consistent character. An interest in preserving the integrity of these neighborhoods through design review and broader tear-down regulations has been expressed. Examples of these neighborhoods include the following.



From the top: Photos of houses in the Wethersfield, Lokerville, Robinhood Road, Nottingham Drive, Euclid Avenue and Strawberry Hill neighborhoods.

- + The Wethersfield neighborhood, although there is a concern that much of the neighborhood character/continuity has been lost due to teardown activity and alteration of existing houses.
- + The Brookdale Road (Lokerville) area in West Natick (1950s slab ranch style houses).
- + The Robinhood Road to Clifton Road area in West Natick adjacent to Lake Cochituate (1950s).
- + The Nottingham Drive/Sherwood Road area in West Natick (1940s and 1950s Sherwood Colonial houses).
- + The Virginia, Curtis and Pilgrim Road area in West Natick (1940s Pelham Cape houses)
- + The Euclid Avenue/Beverly Road area in East Natick (1940s and 1950s cape style houses).
- + The Strawberry Hill area (1940s and 1950s).

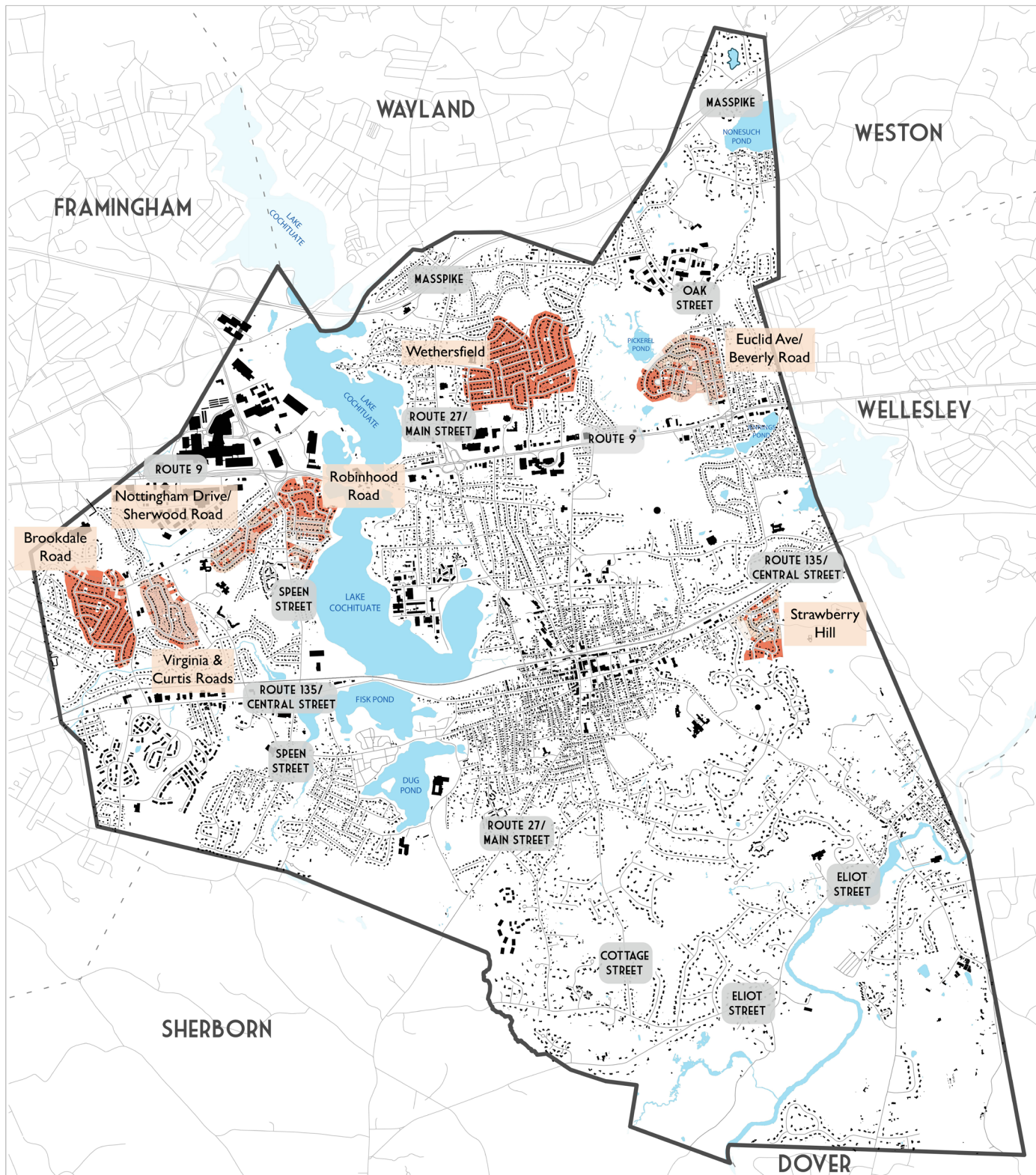
Historic/Cultural Landscapes

Natick’s cultural landscapes have been eloquently described in Natick’s Heritage Landscapes by Peter Golden (Open Post), March 6, 2011. *Our open space and natural landscape, from the colonial-era graveyards that dot the town to a bird sanctuary, town forest, cedar swamp and gravel pit amount to upwards of 1600 acres, many of which are rich in historical association and features. But it is Natick’s unique inventory of forests, waterways and trails that gives one real pause. Too numerous to list in detail, they range from the Town Forest (a parcel of 100 acres given to the community by Mrs. H.S. Hunnewell in 1932) and Lake Cochituate to the Natick Community Organic Farm and Lookout Farm. The latter dates from 1651 and has been called the oldest, continually operating farmstead in America.*

To the west of Lookout Farm lies Broadmoor, a 624 acre Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary notable for its historic associations, not the least of which is the Thomas Sawin House, the oldest built structure in the town. Skirting the southern flank of Broadmoor is the Charles River, a combined larder (fish and wildfowl) as well as transportation corridor for Native Americans in a previous age.

Just to the north of the Town Forest and across Route Nine, lies the “Sunkaway,” a seventy-acre parcel of swamp, pond and woodlands known to conservationists as “The Great White Cedar Swamp.” In centuries past the bark and wood of cedars was a vital resource for building canoes, weaving baskets and covering “wikiups,” the dome-like structures favored by Natick’s Praying Indians for seasonal shelter. Half a mile to the west of the Sunkaway lies Lake Cochituate, where a substantial Native American village located around the site of the present-day Mass Turnpike tolls, was decimated by raiding Mohawks in the late 1670s. On the southern end of the lake lies Pegun Cove, another Native American place.

While many of these resources are connected by trails and walking paths, improving pedestrian connections among these resources and between these resources and neighborhoods continues to be a community goal.



**L
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BUILDING CONSTRUCTION YEAR	
	Prior to 1940
	1940-1949
	1950-1959
	1960-1969
	1970-1979
	1980-1989
	1990-1999
	2000-2009
	2010-Present

MAP 6.4 EXAMPLES OF MID-CENTURY NEIGHBORHOODS





From the top: Photos of the Natick Community Organic Farm, Boradmoor, The Sunkaway and Lake Cochituate.

ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Natick has a large number of arts and cultural resources, ranging from individual musicians and visual artists to arts-related businesses and large organizations. These organizations and resources contribute to Natick's culture and the Town economy through employing residents as well as through taxes. And perhaps just as important, the arts serve as an economic driver in Natick, bringing visitors to the Town Center who patronize arts establishments as well as restaurants and other stores, and enhancing the Town's desirability as a place to live and work.

Natick: Our Community Yesterday and Today (citing the National Center for Charitable Statistics) stated that "cultural non-profits in Natick had a total revenue of just over \$600,000 and a total expenditure of just over \$560,000 in 2003. Contributions to non-profit organizations from people, businesses, and other organizations in Natick total just under \$180,000. The majority of revenues and expenditures are generated by one large arts organization, The Center for Arts in Natick (TCAN). TCAN is not Natick's only arts organization, but it is the largest."

A 2015 inventory of cultural assets in the Town of Natick revealed the following:

Museums

Natick Historical Society

The Natick Historical Society, founded in 1870, operates a museum at the Bacon Library on Eliot Street in South Natick. "The museum and archives tell many rich stories for visitors to 58 Eliot Street. Walking tours of South Natick, illustrated talks, community events, educational programs for school children and families, changing exhibitions at the Morse Institute Library, and a traveling display kiosk share these stories with the community and with people who appreciate history everywhere."

"The Historical Society collects and conserves artifacts, papers and materials important to the origins, development and ongoing life of the town and provides rich educational experiences based on authentic objects, primary sources, stories and lives that engage senior, family and school group audiences in programs, exhibitions and publications. Natick Historical Society's Mission is to inspire an interest in Natick's rich and varied history from its unique origins as a Praying Indian Plantation to the present day." *Source: Natick Historical Society website*

Museum of World War II

The Museum of World War II on Mercer Street just south of Route 9 and The Golden Triangle is a research and educational institution "devoted to preserving and exhibiting the reality of WWII. With over 7,000 artifacts and 500,000 documents and pictures in research archives, it holds the most comprehensive collection of documents and artifacts on display anywhere." The museum receives 5,000 visitors and 500 students annually. In July of 2015 the Natick Zoning Board of Appeals approved an expansion plan for the museum that includes acquisition of an adjacent parcel and construction of a new 60,000 square foot building.

Henry Wilson Shoe Shop

Although not a museum, the Henry Wilson Shoe Shop is operated by the Town of Natick as an historic site. The “ten footer” building is located on West Central Street in West Natick. Built in the 1850s, it was the shoe shop of Henry Wilson, a Senator from Massachusetts and the eighteenth Vice President of the United States. On July 24, 2000, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A ten footer is a small backyard shop structure that was built in the 18th and 19th centuries in New England to serve as a shoemaker’s shop. The name came from the fact that the floor dimensions were usually about 10 feet by 10 feet. The ten footers were forerunners of the large shoe factories that developed in New England later in the 19th century.

Performance and Educational Venues

The Center for Arts in Natick

The Center for Arts in Natick (TCAN) provides a cultural center to the MetroWest Boston region, where national and emerging artists present 350 performances, literary events, art classes and exhibitions annually in an environment that brings together individuals, families, children and seniors. TCAN draws audiences from throughout eastern Massachusetts and from as far afield as southern New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Town of Natick, along with residents and TCAN, collaborated to turn an historic firehouse into a permanent Arts Center, successfully anchoring Natick’s downtown as an arts destination. A newly opened theater on the second floor provides space for screening movies.

TYPE OF RESOURCE	NUMBER OF RESOURCES
Individual Artists, Artisans & Musical Groups	81
Creative Cultural Enterprises, including retail galleries, museums, design/photo services, performing arts theaters and theatre companies	29
Arts Education Institutions, Instruction Enterprises & Other organizations that offer classes	42
Community Cultural Organizations (includes organizations focusing on history, poetry, painting and quilting along with two associations – Natick Artists Open Studios and the Natick Farmers & Winter Markets. The Natick Historical Society, Quinobequin Quilters and Natick Farmers & Winter Markets each have over 100 members.	7

TABLE 6.1: CULTURAL ASSETS IN NATICK.

Source: Natick Center Cultural District Cultural Asset Catalog, September 2015, prepared by FinePoint Associates for The Town of Natick and Natick Center Cultural District



Morse Institute Library

The Morse Institute Library in Natick Center is also a cultural and educational focal point for the Natick community. In 1997, the library expanded and modernized to provide more meeting room space and shelving for books and electronic services, such as access to the internet and other multimedia. The library offered over 1,200 programs in 2005, ranging from musical performances, book talks, and story hours to a variety of training classes. Approximately 350,000 individuals took advantage of the Library’s rich resources and meeting rooms were used over 5,700 times in fiscal Year 2016. *Source: Morse Institute Library Draft Strategic Plan FY2018-FY2022.*

Walnut Hill School for the Arts

The Walnut Hill School for the Arts, an independent boarding and day high school in Natick, has two large performance spaces:

- + The Keiter Center for Performing Arts is used mostly for school productions, many of which are attended by Natick residents. The Walnut Hill Keiter Performance Center had 9,131 visitors in 2014, and 9,290 visits were forecast for 2015.
- + The newly opened Delbridge Family Center for the Arts includes gallery space and a performance space on the first floor, with a dance studio on the second floor. Prometheus Dance has moved its headquarters from Cambridge to Walnut Hill and will operate out of the Delbridge Center. The move is expected to lead to more opportunities for MetroWest residents to experience professional dance through performances, classes, festivals and other activities.



Public Art

In addition to memorials described earlier, public art in Natick encompasses a large number of murals, concentrated mainly around the Town Center, which help to enliven the streetscape and acknowledge the vibrant arts community:

- + Common Street Spiritual Center Unity Mural (2015)
- + Bus shelter mural (2014)
- + Adams Street Murals (2000s)
- + Next Stop Natick Mural at Commuter Rail Station (1999)
- + Five Crows Mural on Union Court off Main Street (2013)
- + Electrical Boxes (2016)
- + Mosaics on Court Street (2012-13)
- + Stained glass installations at the Morse Institute.



From the top: Photos of the Natick Historical Society at the Bacon Free Library, the Museum of World War II and the Henry Wilson Shoe Shop.



From the top: Photos of The Center for the Arts in Natick, the Morse Institute Library and the Delbridge Family Center for the Arts.

Local and Regional Non-Profit Organizations

Natick Center Cultural District

Natick's thriving arts community is mostly concentrated around Natick Center. The Natick Center Cultural District (NCCD) received a state Cultural District designation in 2012. NCCD is funded by the Town and has over 200 members.

The total number of visitors to NCCD events and organizations was 87,000 in 2011, with 100,000 forecast for 2015 and an annual increase target of 15%. Natick Days is a one of the biggest NCCD events, with 9,500 visitors in 2014, 10,500 forecast for 2015 and an annual increase target of 1,000 visitors. Total visitation to arts events was 418,608 in 2014, with 439,437 forecast for 2015 and an annual target increase of 10%. Actual numbers are not available for 2015 and 2016.

The NCCD Advisory Board launched a strategic planning effort in the fall of 2013. The effort resulted in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, summarized below.

Mission Statement: The NCCD's mission is to cultivate a lively and diverse downtown neighborhood by enhancing the cultural, economic and social life of our community. We are led by an innovative partnership of public, private, non-profit and cultural voices.

Vision: Natick Center will be a cultural hub of MetroWest, serving as a regional destination for arts, culture, dining, shopping, business, special events, and community gatherings for residents and visitors alike.

Values Statement: We believe that supporting arts and culture is pivotal to creating a sustainable economic engine in Natick Center, and that the success of the Natick Center Cultural District will improve the downtown area for everyone's benefit.

Investing in a robust Cultural District brings more foot traffic to the downtown and keeps dollars spent in the local economy, ultimately resulting in more tax revenue and jobs created. A vibrant cultural community with opportunities for expansion attracts new artists, cultural organizations and businesses, improving quality of life and making communities more attractive for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. Source: NCCD Strategic Plan 2015-2020

The Strategic Planning Committee identified four Pillars of the Cultural District which sustain the District and represent the strategic goals. These interdependent goals include:

- + Culture: Increase Capacity for Arts and Cultural Development
- + Community/Social: Enhance Natick Center as a Community Gathering Place
- + Economic Development: Foster Economic Development in Natick Center and the Community Overall
- + Governance/Sustainability: Ensure the Long-Term Stability and Success of the Cultural District



The NCCD is governed by Natick Center Associates, Inc., a non-profit, public/private partnership with over 40 years of history working for downtown revitalization. Natick Center Associates is comprised of property owners, retail and office workers, concerned neighbors, Town officials, nonprofits and corporations. Natick Center Associates and the Town of Natick are mutually responsible for the successful achievement of NCCD goals and compliance with Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Cultural Districts Initiative requirements.

The Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund

The Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) is an initiative of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The goal of the Cultural Facilities Fund is to increase investments from both the public sector and the private sector to support the sound planning and development of cultural facilities in Massachusetts. Funds awarded to Natick projects in the past have included a \$300,000 award to the Museum of World War II for expansion of this facility to triple exhibition space and create an education center.

The Natick Cultural Council

The Natick Cultural Council is also funded through the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The Massachusetts Cultural Council makes annual allocations to each municipality based on population and the state’s annual budget. The Natick Cultural Council allocation is generally between \$5,000 and \$10,000; that money is then distributed through an annual grant cycle that prioritizes events and projects that have a direct benefit to residents. Projects funded in the past have included an annual 4th grade trip to attend a performance at Wheelock College, a science and art summer school program, performances at TCAN and an expansion of the Natick Open Studios program.

At left, from the top: Photos of the Unity Mural, the bus shelter mural, Adams Street murals, Next Stop Natick Mural, electrical boxes and mosaics on Court Street.



From the top: the Natick Center Cultural District logo, (three) photos of Natick Arts Walk 2016 and photo of Natick Days 2016.

Historic and Cultural Resources Planning

Historical Commission

Consistent with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40, Section 8D, Natick established an Historical Commission, for the preservation, protection and development of the historical or archaeological assets the town. The commission "shall conduct researches for places of historic or archaeological value, shall cooperate with the state archaeologist in conducting such researches or other surveys, and shall seek to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it deems necessary for its work."

Over the years, the Natick Historic Commission has expanded the inventory of historic resources in Natick and plans to inventory the neighborhood just south of Natick Center and South Natick by the river.

Historic District Commission

Under the authority of the Historic District Act, Chapter 40C, of the Massachusetts General Laws, Natick established its own Historic District Commission in 1974 with the concurrent establishment of the original John Eliot Historic District in South Natick. The Commission also oversees activity in the Natick Center and Henry Wilson Historic Districts.

Under the Historic District By-Law and the rules adopted by the Town of Natick Historic District Commission, certification by the Commission is required before work is begun that will affect grounds or the exterior of buildings within the Local Historic Districts that are visible from a public way. Work that requires prior certification includes any alteration to the exterior of a structure, including any work involving signs, walls and fences, terraces, walks, driveways, etc. Certification is not required for work done inside a building that does not affect its exterior, or for work on grounds and the exterior of buildings that will not be visible to the public.

Natick Design Review Board

The intent of this board, which derives authority from the Natick Zoning Bylaw, is to provide detailed review of exterior alterations made to structures having substantial impact on the Natick Downtown Mixed Use District, to prevent blight, to enhance the natural and aesthetic qualities of the Downtown, to conserve the value of land and buildings, and to protect and preserve the historic and cultural heritage of the Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. The five-person board is composed of a Planning Board Representative appointed by the Planning Board; and two at-large members, a Natick Center Associates Representative, and an Historical Commission Representative, all appointed by Board of Selectmen.

Local Regulations, Policies and Initiatives

Natick Zoning Bylaw Section III-J – Historic Preservation

This regulation was enacted “to encourage the preservation and continued use of buildings of historic or architectural significance” and “to protect the existing character of neighborhoods by the adaptive reuse of such buildings or structures.”

Under this regulation, the Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA), the Planning Board, may grant a special permit for re-use, construction, and occupancy of buildings, and structures relating to qualifying buildings, if either of the following criteria are met:

- + Determination by the State Historical Commission that the building or structure is eligible for nomination on the National Register of Historic Places, or is already included in such
- + Unanimous vote of the Natick Historical Commission, subsequent to a public hearing, that the building or structure is of historic, architectural or cultural significance.

In addition to uses allowed as of right or by Special Permit in the underlying zoning district, the SPGA may grant a special permit to allow town houses, an apartment house or a home occupation/customary home occupation.

A Historic Preservation must conform to the following requirements:

- + Number of dwelling units (net usable area divided by 3,500 square feet)
- + The ability to provide adequate off-street parking; new construction shall be limited to 10 percent of the interior habitable floor area or above grade gross volume of the historic building;
- + For new construction the SPGA may modify the dimensional requirements for the district by up to 10 percent.

Approval of the application for a special permit to allow for a Historic Preservation project is subject to an SPGA determination that the Plan is superior to a conventional site development, based on the following criteria:

- + The proposed project substantially preserves the building or structure.
- + Determination that the development is not substantially more detrimental to abutting properties and neighborhood.
- + Appropriate use of materials and manner of construction.
- + Preservation of landscape features and scenic views.

MGL Article 76: Regulations for the Demolition, Alteration or Relocation of Historically Significant Buildings or Structures.

“This bylaw was adopted for the purpose of protecting and preserving significant buildings and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features pertaining

to the history of the Town of Natick and for the purpose of promoting the public welfare through the retention of the architectural, historical, cultural and aesthetic heritage of the Town.” The intent of this bylaw is to encourage owners, and others, to preserve, rehabilitate and restore significant buildings or structures rather than demolishing them.

This bylaw applies to:

- + Any building or structure listed on, or which is subject of a pending application for inclusion on, the National Register of Historic Places or the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places; or
- + Any building or structure included in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. Further nominations to said inventory shall occur only after notice to the assessed owner of the building or structure and a public hearing on said proposed nomination.
- + The provisions of this bylaw shall not apply to any building or structure located in a local historical district subject to regulation under the provisions of General Laws Chapter 40C.

The bylaw requires that, upon receipt of an application for a permit to demolish, alter or relocate a building or structure that is regulated by this bylaw, the application is forwarded to the Natick Historic Commission. The Commission then determines whether the building or structure is regulated by this bylaw, and if so, whether the building or structure may be a Historically Significant Building or Structure.

If the Commission preliminarily determines that the building or structure may be a Historically Significant Building or Structure, the application is reviewed at a public hearing and the Commission determines whether the building or structure is a Preferably Preserved Building or Structure. If the determination is that the subject building or structure is Preferably Preserved, the Inspector may not issue a permit for a period of six months from the date of such determination, unless the Commission informs the Building Inspector in writing prior to the expiration of the six month period that:

- + The Commission is satisfied that the applicant has made a bonafide, reasonable, and unsuccessful effort to locate a purchaser for the building or structure who is willing to preserve, move, rehabilitate or restore the building or structure; or
- + The applicant has agreed to accept such permit subject to conditions approved by the commission.

Currently, only 16.8% of Natick’s inventoried historic resources are protected by MGL Article 76. The remainder of the resources were added to the inventory after the adoption of Article 76 and are not covered by its regulations. It is the goal of the Historic Commission to conduct the public hearing process required to have all of the inventoried resources covered by the bylaw.

Issues and Opportunities

Natick 360 included the following goal related to the list of issues and opportunities below: *Promote, foster and enable an economically, socially and culturally vibrant and diverse Natick Center.* That goal is still strongly supported today.

At the November 29, 2016 Natick 2030+ Community Meeting, a number of residents discussed their desire for the Town to go further in preserving, protecting and cultivating Natick's historic resources. Other issues and opportunities were identified through stakeholder meetings and research for this report. These suggestions for the most part can be organized into the following categories:

Maintenance of Public Historic Resources:

- + Considering adoption of the Community Preservation Act and participating in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Historic Heritage Program.
- + Improving the area around the Veteran's Memorial.
- + Displaying more of the Natick Historical Society's collection (note: the Historical Society is a private organization).
- + Trying to find grant money to repair headstones in ancient cemeteries.
- + Funding repairs to the Henry Wilson Memorial.

Strengthening Protection of Historic Resources:

- + Reducing teardown activity and creating more prescriptive zoning and/or design review authority for tear downs to ensure that new development is compatible with the character of adjacent development in both residential and commercial districts.
- + Better integrating historical landmarks into physical plans.
- + Expanding the inventory of historic resources to other parts of the Town not yet covered, including the neighborhoods adjacent to the Town Center, south Natick by the river, and early post World War II neighborhoods.
- + Expanding the list of historic properties protected by Article 76 to include all inventoried properties.
- + Providing grants for renovation of historic buildings.
- + Highlighting the Town's history and resources.
- + Including more information on the Town's historical heritage when telling Natick's story.
- + Cultivating Natick's historical heritage.

- + Creating stronger ties to Natick Labs.
- + Expanding on Natick's cultural resources.
- + Better utilizing the existing cultural talent in Natick.
- + Creating more nightlife in the Town Center to provide "after theater" dining or drinking options.
- + Expanding the arts and cultural resources to encourage their continued contribution to the vitality and economic strength of Natick Center.

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HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES 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.



Throughout the Natick 2030+ process, as well as the Natick 360 process, the community has expressed a strong interest and concern with protecting and celebrating the Town's heritage, including historic and cultural resources. Interest in promoting and expanding the arts and cultural community, which has been growing in Natick and contributes to the character of the community, also has been expressed.

Drawing from an understanding of the existing conditions of Natick's historic and cultural resources, and keeping in mind the identified issues and opportunities, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for the promotion, expansion and protection of historic and cultural resources 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. Protect and promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick's historic heritage through increased historic/cultural events and programming.**
- 2. Support and encourage arts and culture by enhancing participants' experience with expanded opportunities for arts and entertainment venues and nightlife options.**

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.



Art Studios on Adams Street

GOAL 1

Protect and promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick's historic heritage through increased historic/cultural events and programming.



LEAD 
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
PLANNING BOARD

SUPPORT 
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

CELEBRATE NATICK'S HISTORIC HERITAGE THROUGH IDENTIFYING AND PROTECTING HISTORIC/CULTURAL RESOURCES.

While 2008 and 2012 studies expanded the areas covered by surveys of historic resources, a number of recommendations from the surveys have not been implemented. Without implementation, the surveys themselves are of limited value, doing little to protect historic resources. **The Town should implement the recommendations from those surveys, including:**

- + **Create a Walnut Hill National Register Historic District.** The Town should contact the Walnut Hill School to determine their interest in being a part of the District. The designation could be helpful to the school in raising money for building renovations and they could be encouraged to participate in developing the application.
- + **Nominate four individual houses to the National Register (see list in Existing Conditions).** A first step in implementing this recommendation would be to contact the current owners to determine their interest in such a designation. Without support from the owners, it is not recommended that this recommendation be pursued.
- + **Survey the Italian neighborhood in the area around Summer Street (from South Main Street to Washington Ave.) and the residential properties at the east end of South Avenue (from Hayes Street to Dewey Street).**
- + **Expand the Natick Center Historic District to include resources on South Avenue, Adams Street, and a portion of Washington Street.**
- + **Expand the John Eliot National Register Historic District to include resources further north on Union Street.**
- + **List the United States Post Office on Common Street on the National Register.**

The survey also recommended that the Town consider establishing Neighborhood Conservation Districts to protect the Side Hall Greek Revival and Italianate cottages from 116 to 160 North Main Street, the Italian neighborhood on Summer Street (from South Main Street to Washington Avenue) and the residential properties at the east end of South Avenue (from Hayes Street to Dewey Street).



The Post Office on Common Street in Natick Center

While the concept of Neighborhood Conservation Districts, which would entail the development of design guidelines and non-binding advisory reviews, was considered for the historic neighborhoods identified in the surveys, it was determined to be cumbersome to implement and too restrictive. Similarly, it was decided that adoption of a Large House Review bylaw, would be a cumbersome method for achieving the aim of preserving neighborhood scale and character.

At the same time, interest in protecting the existing mid-century neighborhoods throughout the Town (see Map 3.3) has been expressed during the Natick 2030+ process, as they represent an important historical record of the development 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. The concept of Neighborhood Conservation Districts was also discussed as a method for maintaining the housing scale and character of these neighborhoods, but rather than creating a new regulatory process through Neighborhood Conservation Districts and Large House Review, it is recommended the protections be built into the zoning code. **New zoning for individual neighborhoods should be developed to set requirements for massing or scale, including elements such as minimum and maximum setbacks, heights, lot size and coverage, and sky exposure planes, based on the scale of the existing housing stock within each neighborhood.** (The Sky Exposure Plane is a virtual surface that is inclined toward the inside from the boundaries of the zoning lot and beginning at a certain height. The plan, which can be interrupted only under certain conditions, allows light and air into the street.) Key to the success of this recommendation is strict implementation of these requirements, and the minimization of variances.



ENCOURAGE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

As discussed in Existing Conditions, only approximately 17 percent of the resources listed on the Town’s inventory of historic resources are covered by Article 76, the Demolition Delay Bylaw, which delays demolition, alteration or relocation of a building for six months, pending review by the Natick Historical Commission; the Bylaw only covers the resources that had been inventoried at the time of adoption. **Article 76 should be amended to cover all of the resources on the inventory (this change was passed at the Spring 2018 Annual Town Meeting).** This amendment increases the responsibilities of the Historic Commission, due to increasing the number of buildings covered by the Bylaw.

Natick’s wealth of historic buildings contributes greatly to the character of the Town as a whole, as well as of individual neighborhoods. The buildings provide a constant reminder of the Town’s history and historical development patterns.

LEAD

PLANNING BOARD
TOWN MEETING

SUPPORT

HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

 **1-5 YEARS** 

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 the delay period should be expanded from six months to one year. Relief could include a reduction in parking and open space requirements and a loosening 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; maximum height (stories), off-street parking and loading requirements; and landscaping and screening requirements.

 **1-5 YEARS** 

The Town should reconsider the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property, and municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. The CPA statute also creates a statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), which provides distributions each year to communities that have adopted CPA. These annual disbursements serve as an incentive for communities to pass CPA. Natick voters rejected a measure to adopt the act in 2006, but interest has been expressed in revisiting adoption of the CPA.

 **4-7 YEARS** 

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 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 it 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

REGULATIONS ARE IN PLACE TO PROTECT AND ENCOURAGE REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES. THE NUMBER OF BUILDINGS SAVED UNDER THESE PROTECTIONS SHOULD BE EVALUATED EVERY THREE YEARS.



MassArt's sparcl ArtMobile

R1.3

LEAD 
 COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
 DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 
 SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
 NATICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 NATICK CENTER CULTURAL DISTRICT

PROMOTE AWARENESS OF ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND NATICK’S HISTORIC HERITAGE THROUGH INCREASED HISTORIC/ CULTURAL EVENTS, EDUCATION, AND PROGRAMMING

Throughout the Natick 2030+ process, residents expressed an interest in increasing community awareness of the Town’s rich cultural heritage. The 2008 and 2012 surveys previously described recommended this as well: “The Town’s education community, including the Historical Society, Public Library [the Town actually has two public libraries] and the public schools, should be encouraged to develop historic preservation education materials and programs for the Town’s school system, utilizing the results of this survey. Interpretive programs [to increase awareness of Natick’s historical and cultural assets] could include the sponsorship of walking tours; the publication of brochures and books on the community’s architectural history and development; the establishment of displays in public buildings; and on site interpretation of historic buildings, structures, and sites with the existing marker program.”

1-5 YEARS 

Participants at the Historical and Cultural Resources Round Table, conducted with Town departments and other stakeholders in the arts and cultural community, expressed the desire to increase opportunities for teens to engage in the arts as well as the Town’s cultural heritage. Students in the Natick High School Honors Program currently help at the Historical Society Museum. **Developing brochures and walking maps of historic resources, in collaboration with the Historical Society, would be a great project for an art and/or history class, providing both graphic design experience and an opportunity to learn more about Natick’s history.**

4-7 YEARS 

One recommendation from the RoundTable was the introduction of an “ArtMobile” or drop-in center for teens. While a drop-in center provides a larger venue, and therefore can accommodate a wider variety of activities, it requires the provision of transportation to bring teens to the center. An ArtMobile outfitted with art supplies could provide arts opportunities at different locations on different days, reducing the need for transportation. MassART’s Center for Art and Community Partnerships sparcl is an ArtMobile that travels around Boston to lead innovative and intergenerational art workshops, programs, and special events designed to stimulate cross cultural conversations and build community. sparcl collaborates with schools, libraries, community organizations, and artists to ignite art and design in the neighborhood. **An assessment of an ArtMobile or a similar drop-in program to determine funding, staffing and other operational requirements, as well as potential sponsors and organizers, would provide the first step in establishing a program.**

This ambitious program would most likely require an outside sponsor and/or operator, but would help to increase arts opportunities for Natick youth and provide another activity for teens.

4-7 YEARS 

Another option for increased educational programming is the STARS Residencies Program. “STARS Residencies (Students and Teachers working with Artists, Scientists, and Scholars) provide grants of \$500-\$5,000 to schools to support creative learning residencies of three days or more in the arts, sciences, and humanities. STARS Residencies recognize the vital role that creative learning in the arts, sciences, and humanities plays in the successful education of young people. **The Town should consider applying for participation in the STARS Residencies Program.**

1-5 YEARS



While there are frequently a number of arts-related activities throughout the Town, including displays of artwork as well as performances, it is not always easy for organizations to schedule venues for, and publicize, these activities, because of the lack of a centralized location for requesting/reserving space and publicizing events. **The Town should explore centralizing reservation and publicity activities/services.** For example, a centralized calendar listing all display and/or performance spaces within Town-owned buildings would enable an organization to quickly determine where and when there is space available. The calendar could also contain the contact information for the person/department responsible for authorizing use of each space. A single point of contact for reserving space in any building would greatly simplify the process, but would be difficult to implement, as these spaces are controlled by a variety of entities (e.g., individual schools are responsible for the space within their buildings, and the Morse Institute controls use of the rooms within that building).

1-5 YEARS



The Town could also provide assistance with outreach and publicity for arts events by allowing them to be listed on the Town website and in the Common Guide. Contact information for these two outreach vehicles should be provided to arts organizations.

4-7 YEARS



A comprehensive list of funding sources for arts programs and public art would be very useful to local arts organizations that are frequently searching for funding. **The Town should work with the Natick Center Cultural District to develop and maintain this information and should consider providing non-profits with grant writing assistance.**

ON-GOING



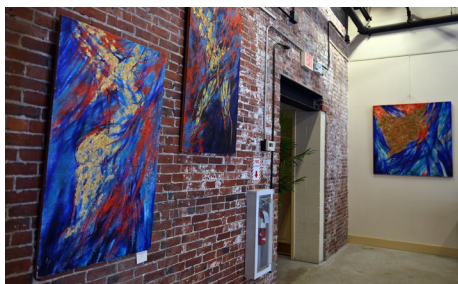
The Town should continue to develop partnerships with like-minded organizations in Natick as well as in neighboring towns/MetroWest and the State to expand programming and publicity. Examples include The Foundation for MetroWest (provides grants for family support, arts and culture, environmental and youth development and work with non-profits to build visibility, connections and expertise to deliver their mission), The Walnut Hill School, and Arts are Essential (works in partnership with educators and artists to bring arts experiences that enrich, educate, and enlighten students of all ages while inspiring creativity and imagination through performances, concerts, hands-on workshops, residencies, and cultural exchanges). Several Massachusetts State agencies provide funding and technical assistance. The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism assists with promotion of cultural districts on consumer and travel industry sections of the state tourism website, cultural district promotion in arts and history newsletters, and provides assistance on how to market cultural districts assets to domestic and international visitors.



METRIC

**DEVELOPMENT AND ON-GOING OPERATION OF A
CENTRALIZED RESERVATION AND PUBLICITY SYSTEM FOR
ARTS ACTIVITIES.**

Art by local artists on display at TCAN and a performance at the bandshell on the Common.



GOAL 2



Support and encourage arts and culture by enhancing participants' experience with expanded opportunities for arts and entertainment venues and nightlife options.

LEAD



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PLANNING BOARD

INCREASE ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS VENUES

A number of residents expressed an interest in the creation of more venues for arts and entertainment, including both studio space and performance venues. Opportunities for new arts and entertainment spaces can be increased in several ways.

In planning for public facilities and infrastructure improvements, consideration should be given to including space for art installations/performances.

This consideration should be applied to new public buildings and renovations to existing public buildings, as well to outdoor spaces such as parks and plazas. In outdoor settings, the accommodation can be as simple as providing electrical service to accommodate sound and light systems, and as elaborate as incorporating an amphitheater.

ON-GOING



ON-GOING



Developers should be encouraged to include entertainment venues, particularly in Natick Center and The Golden Triangle, where the Town is working to create an active mixed-use environment; eating and drinking establishments can help to support entertainment venues.

For example, The Golden Triangle Planning Study specifically mentions the potential for an amphitheater in the description of a conceptual new open space and zoning recommendations for allowable uses include indoor and outdoor amusement and entertainment. The design principles for The Golden Triangle also include incorporating entertainment uses.



ON-GOING



Restaurants, coffee shops and office lobbies all provide opportunities for rotating art displays. In addition to exposing visitors to art, such displays can also bring in new customers and help to support local artists. **Property owners and developers should be encouraged to include such opportunities 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.**

ON-GOING 

METRIC

  **R2.2**

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING BOARD

SUPPORT 

NATICK CENTER CULTURAL DISTRICT

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 (see Chapter 5).

NEW ARTS VENUES HAVE OPENED AND TWO OR MORE ROTATING ART DISPLAYS ARE HELD ANNUALLY.

ENACT ZONING CHANGES TO ENCOURAGE FLEXIBLE/MIXED-USE IN THE TOWN CENTER AND THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Municipalities are increasingly amending their zoning to allow “Maker Spaces” or “Artisan Manufacturing” to allow artists and “artisan manufacturing” in both downtowns and industrial districts. Nashville, Tennessee’s new ordinance defines Artisan Manufacturing as “the shared or individual use of hand-tools, mechanical tools and electronic tools for the manufacture of finished products or parts including design, processing, fabrication, assembly, treatment, and packaging of products; as well as the incidental storage, sales and distribution of such products. Typical artisan manufacturing uses include, but are not limited to: electronic goods, food and bakery products; beverages; printmaking; household appliances; leather products; jewelry and clothing/apparel; metal work; furniture; glass or ceramic production; paper manufacturing.” The purpose of the zoning is to:

- + Facilitate live/work and live/work/sell mixed-use spaces for arts and creative industries.
- + Provide and advocate for economic or regulatory support for combined residential and commercial space for artists and adaptive reuse for arts and cultural uses
- + Facilitate the development of spaces and facilities that can serve as arts incubators.
- + Amend zoning and offer incentives that can stimulate production of low-cost space and services to support artistic, cultural, and creative professionals and arts-specific business incubators



Artisan manufacturing enterprises allow potential patrons to view as well to purchase the products.





1-5 YEARS



Natick should add a similar definition to the Zoning Bylaw and explore districts where this use would be appropriate. Locations where this use should be considered include the Downtown Mixed Use District, Industrial I zones, The Golden Triangle and along West Central Street (Route 135) in West Natick. The Golden Triangle Planning Study specifically recommends including art gallery/creation space and custom fabrication/artisanal industrial space as allowable uses in revised zoning for the area.



ZONING CHANGES TO ENCOURAGE FLEXIBLE/MIXED-USE HAVE BEEN ENACTED



New outdoor seating at Buttercup Restaurant at 13 West Central Street.



Pedestrian scaled decorative lighting and banners on East Central Street.



R2.3

IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND ENTERTAINMENT/ARTS VENUES

LEAD

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

PLANNING BOARD

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. Participants frequently commented on the need for additional restaurants and/or bars to provide increased options for people going to arts and entertainment events. The new Buttercup Restaurant which opened on the ground floor at 15 West Central (the redeveloped American Legion building) will help to increase these options, but opportunities for other restaurants should continue to be explored. The new Residences on the Common building (on the former Town Paint site) has ground floor space which could potentially be used for a restaurant.

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



ON-GOING





METRIC

ONE NEW RESTAURANT HAS PROVIDED AN OUTDOOR SEATING AREA AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.



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



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. **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 and the alley from Middlesex Avenue to Central Street, although the alley is in private ownership.**

7-10 YEARS



METRIC

ONE OR MORE OF THE STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.

The Town is currently undertaking development of a Natick Center Creative Place-making Strategy through a Technical Assistance Grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council; implementation of the recommendations from that Strategy will support the recommendations described above.



Before (photos) and after (renderings) of alley (Allen Court) in Worcester with treatment similar to that described for Adams Street.



R2.4

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

4-7 YEARS 

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 





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

Develop wayfinding and signage that is consistent and helps define an overall character and identity for the Town. Formalizing entry points and connections helps orient both residents and visitors as they make their way throughout Town. Developing a hierarchy and thematic signage system that incorporates multiple Town resources will help communicate the interconnected nature of the various elements. Through the use of thematic signage, parks and civic and cultural resources will be better identified as Town destinations, while trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and roads will be more strongly associated with an overall connectivity network for the Town. 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 destinations throughout the Town. (See Chapter 7 for an example of a city wayfinding system.)











Wayfinding signage examples.

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Protect and promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick's historic heritage through increased historic/cultural events and programming.</p>	<p>RI.1: Celebrate Natick's historic heritage through identifying and protecting historic/cultural resources.</p>	<p>Implement the recommendations from the 2008 & 2012 historic surveys, including: creating a Walnut Hill National Register Historic District, nominating four individual houses and the U.S. Post Office on Common Street to the National Register, surveying additional areas, and expanding the Natick Center Historic District. </p>	<p>Historical Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing</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</p>	<p>Historical Commission</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing</p>
	<p>RI.2: Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings</p>	<p>Provide relief for adaptive reuse of buildings on historic inventory, subject to review by the Special Permit Granting Authority and extend demolition delay from six months to one year. </p>	<p>Planning Board Town Meeting Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Historical Commission</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing Economic Development</p>
		<p>Reconsider the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). </p>	<p>Planning Board Town Meeting</p>	<p>Historical Commission Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing Economic Development</p>
		<p>Establish a fund to provide low interest loans and/or grants for ADA improvements, fit-out or façade improvements to encourage preservation of historic properties.</p>	<p>Planning Board Town Meeting Community & Economic Development Department</p>	<p>Historical Commission Finance Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		<p>Land Use Housing Economic Development</p>

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility 	Support Responsibility 	Time Frame 	Metric	Coordination 
						Regulations are in place to protect and encourage rehabilitation of historic structures. The number of buildings saved under these protections should be evaluated every three years.	
	R.1.3: Promote awareness of arts and cultural resources and Natick's historic heritage through increased historic/cultural events, education and programming	Have High School art and/or history class develop brochures and walking maps of historic resources, in collaboration with the Historical Society.	Community & Economic Development Department	School Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS		
		Conduct an assessment of an ArtMobile or similar program to determine funding, staffing and other operational requirements, as well as potential sponsors and organizers.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	4-7 YEARS		
		Apply for participation in the STARS Residencies Program to have an Artist in Residence in the schools.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	4-7 YEARS		
		Explore centralizing space reservation and publicity activities/services.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS	Development and on-going operation of a centralized reservation and publicity system for arts activities.	

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility 	Support Responsibility 	Time Frame 	Metric	Coordination 
		Provide assistance with outreach and publicity for arts events by allowing them to be listed on the Town website and in the Common Guide.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS		
		Providing Non-Profits with grant writing assistance.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	4-7 YEARS		
		Continue to develop partnerships with like-minded organizations in Natick as well as in neighboring towns/metro-west and the State to expand programming and publicity.	Community & Economic Development Department	Community Services Department Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District	ON-GOING		
Goal 2: Support and encourage arts and culture by enhancing participants' experience with expanded opportunities for arts and entertainment venues and nightlife options.	R2.1: Increase entertainment & arts venues	Consider including space for art installations/performance in planning for public facilities and infrastructure improvements,	Community & Economic Development Department Facilities Management Department	Economic Development Committee Planning Board	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development
		Encourage developers to include entertainment venues, including eating and drinking establishments in Natick Center and The Golden Triangle. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Encourage property owners and developers to include opportunities for art displays in restaurants and lobby spaces, and create pop-up arts spaces to fill vacant storefronts until longer-term tenants are found. 	Community & Economic Development Department Planning Board	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development
		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 Economic Development Committee	Planning Board	ON-GOING		Land Use Economic Development
						New arts and entertainment venues have opened and two or more rotating art displays are held annually.	
	R2.2: Enact zoning changes to encourage flexible/mixed use in the Town Center and The Golden Triangle.	Add artisan/industrial space as a use category in the Zoning Code and explore districts where this use would be appropriate. 	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department	Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS	Zoning changes to encourage flexible/mixed-use have been enacted.	Economic Development Land Use
	R2.3: Improve the environment around entertainment/arts venues	Encourage downtown developers to create indoor and outdoor dining opportunities as well as streetscape improvements such as planters and seating. 	Planning Board Community & Economic Development Department		ON-GOING	One new restaurant has provided an outdoor seating area and streetscape improvements.	Economic Development Land Use Transportation
		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	Adjacent Private Property Owners Natick Center Cultural District	1-5 YEARS		Economic Development Land Use Transportation

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Make streetscape improvements in Natick Center, particularly along Main Street, including planters, banners and decorative pedestrian scale lighting similar to that on Central Street, in conjunction with traffic improvement recommendations. 	Community & Economic Development Department Public Works Department	Adjacent Private Property Owners Planning Board	4-7 YEARS		Economic Development Land Use 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 Private Property Owners	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
						One or more of the streetscape improvement projects has been implemented.	
	R2.4: Develop a consistent system of wayfinding that connects open spaces, trail networks, transportation resources, and cultural amenities throughout the Town.	Develop wayfinding and signage that is consistent and helps define an overall character and identity for the Town. 	Community & Economic Development Department	Historical Commission Historical Society Natick Center Cultural District Open Space Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use Open Space Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources

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7. Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources

KEY FINDINGS

- + The combined public and private open space in Natick covers approximately 23% of the land area.
- + Nearly 90% of the land area of Natick is within 1/4 mile of public open space, but less than half of the Town is within 1/4 mile of a park entrance.
- + The Town active recreation facilities are at capacity and additional facilities are needed, especially in the northeastern and southern-most portions of the Town.
- + The Town recently protected a 16.3 acre parcel in the Pegan Hill Reservation and recently purchased 21 acres of land for the Cochituate Rail Trail.

Introduction

The Town of Natick has a strong heritage of preserving its outstanding open space and natural resource assets and providing a variety of excellent recreational facilities. Over the last twenty years the open space, recreation and natural resources of the Town have been reviewed as part of the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan, Natick 360 Strategic Plan 2008-2012 visioning process, the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields. While the 2002 Plan expressed alarm at the pace at which new development was taking over existing open space, the emphasis in recent years has been to encourage redevelopment of underutilized land in the downtown area, and on existing industrial land, through zoning such as the HOOP and the Smart Growth Overlay District (40R) program. As part of the Natick 360 process, "stewardship of its diverse open spaces, and natural resources" was identified as one of the six core "Values" for the Town of Natick. The high value residents placed on the Town's open space was again reinforced in the feedback received during the public meeting process for Natick 2030+. In the initial public meeting, the Town's offerings of open space and recreational amenities were repeatedly listed among its strengths and assets by residents participating in the process.

As part of the Natick 360 Strategic Plan 2008-2012 visioning process, seven key "Visions" were also developed for the Town - one of which was to create a future in which "Natick's natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community." This "Vision" was further elaborated as follows:

// Natick supports responsible stewardship of its natural resources, including its aquifer, open spaces, forests and trees, farms, parks, lakes, wildlife habitat and views. Natick may exercise this stewardship through appropriate acquisition, regulation, mitigation and restoration strategies. //

~ Natick 360 Strategic Plan

NATICK 360 VISIONING PROCESS

In general, residents demonstrated strong support for Town purchase of more open space. In the Natick 360 Strategic Plan Community Survey, residents were asked about their willingness to pay additional user fees, property taxes, and/or sales taxes to help fund various items in Natick. "Purchase of land for future parks and open space" ranked 8th of 23 items listed, with 60 percent strongly or somewhat in support.

For the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) the values of the Natick 360 process were expanded upon with a focus on Natick's open space and natural resources. The 2012 OSRP identified the following goals for Natick:

- + Protect Natick's open spaces, including lakes, rivers, streams, woodlands, farms, and parks, that can be enjoyed by future generations.
- + Provide and maintain playing fields and other recreational facilities that support the needs of the population.
- + Preserve and protect the Town's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.
- + Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect our open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the town.
- + Seek opportunities for reclaiming previously developed sites for recreational opportunities.
- + Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town's open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities.
- + Develop and implement a management plan for open space.

Following the process for the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, which covered both the ecological benefits and recreational assets of the Town's existing open spaces, the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields focused primarily on the Town's active recreational resources. The 2016 study provided a comprehensive inventory and analysis of all existing conditions and a series of recommendations for improving field and park facilities throughout the Town of Natick. A summary of those recommendations is covered under the Recreational Amenities section of this chapter.



Town Center Common



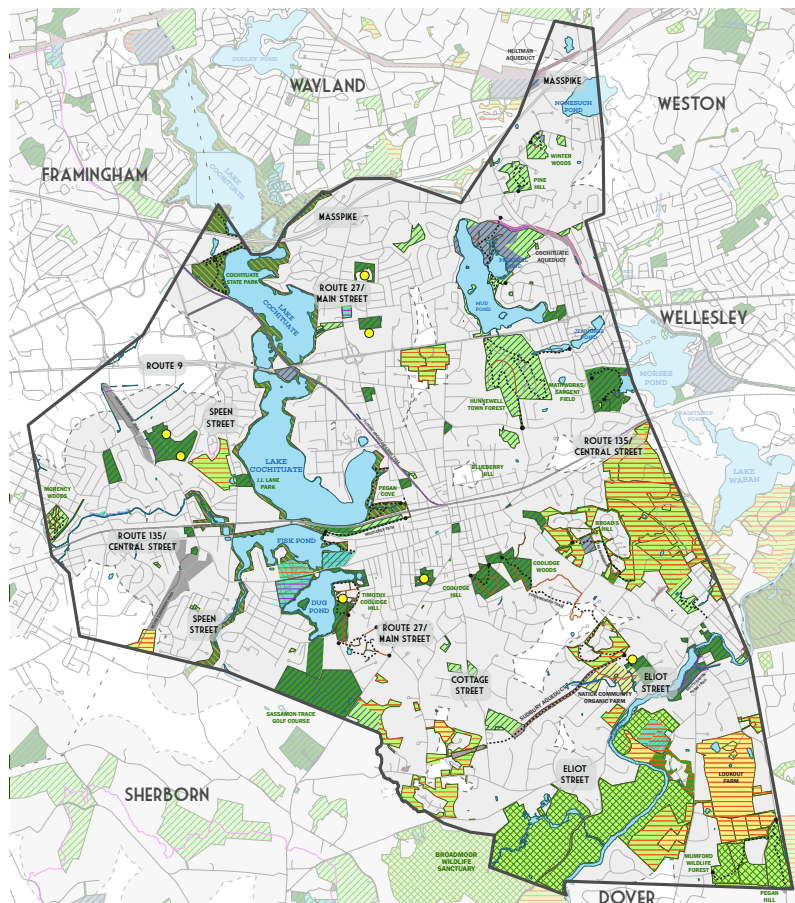
Cochituate State Park



Grove Park

As part of the public process for this Natick 2030+ Comprehensive Plan, residents again have echoed support for preservation, conservation and maintenance of the Town’s open space system. During the first public meeting the public comments surrounding open space generally fell within one of three overarching themes:

- 1 The total available area and general state of the natural open spaces around Natick is a major asset to the Town and future efforts should focus on maintaining the ecological health of these spaces and creating strong networks of open spaces.
- 2 Access to the Town’s open space network needs to be improved and strong connections from all neighborhoods should be a priority. A variety of access improvements need to be made – sidewalks, bike lanes, bike trails, walking trails, accessibility – and should be coordinated with general transportation improvements in Town.
- 3 The recreation and programmed spaces in town are under stress from high levels of use, and there is a need for additional recreational amenities. Residents wished to see a greater variety of recreational uses, including varying athletic field types, community gardens, dog parks, public pools, a teen center, and family oriented destinations. These comments echoed the findings of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields.

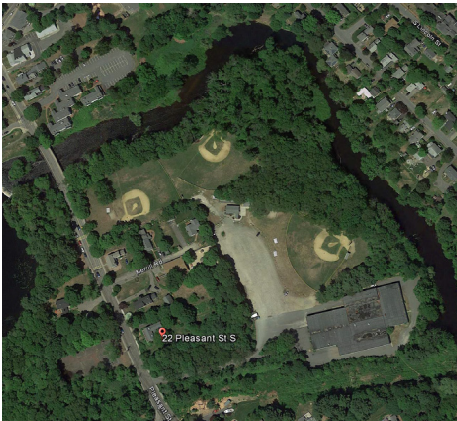


EXISTING OPEN SPACE

(see page 7.9 for full map and legend). Source: Natick Assessing Department data and MassGIS.



Pegan Hill Walking Trail



22 Pleasant Street



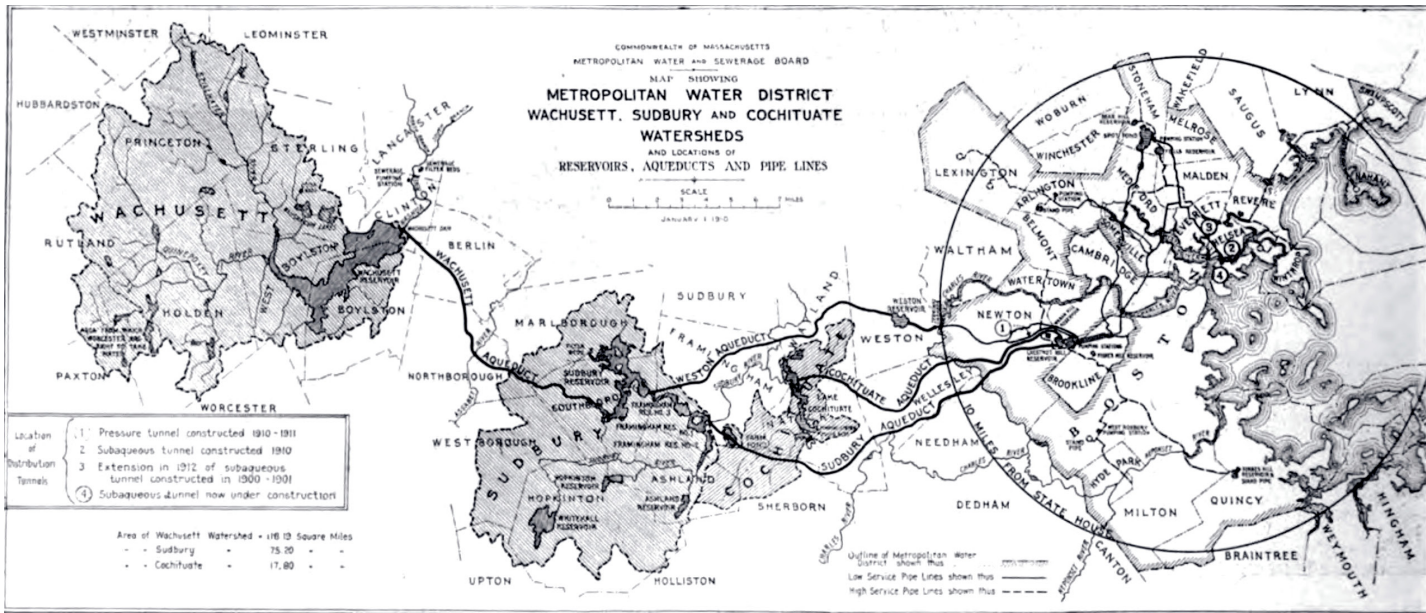
Cochituate Rail Trail Corridor

Recent Open Space and Recreation Actions/Accomplishments

Through the efforts of the Town of Natick, the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC), and other committees and interest groups, a number of new open space acquisitions and improvements have been made in recent years. Those actions and accomplishments are listed by category below.

Town Open Space Expansion

- + **Pegan Hill:** In December of 2015, Town Meeting appropriated \$1 million to purchase a conservation restriction on a 16-acre parcel at the top of Pegan Hill, enabling The Trustees of Reservations to purchase this parcel for \$3.3 million to add to its existing Pegan Hill Reservation. A few months earlier, Dover Land Conservation Trust purchased the adjacent 24-acre parcel for \$3.5 million. The Trustees now manage this land, along with the adjacent 26-acre Mumford Wildlife Forest, resulting in 100 acres open to the public, as well as surrounding land protected under Conservation Restrictions but not open to the public. The Trustees held a public opening on June 25, 2016.
- + **22 Pleasant Street:** In May of 2016, Town Meeting appropriated \$3.2 million to purchase the 4.1 acre riverfront parcel at 22 Pleasant Street to add to the existing 11.2 acre Hunnewell baseball fields. The plans for the new facility have not yet been developed.
- + **Cochituate Rail Trail:** In November of 2016, Town Meeting appropriated \$3.1 million from the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Fund and \$2.96 million from borrowing to purchase the CSX right-of-way. Previously, in April of 2016, Town Meeting approved taking the so-called Wonder Bread spur by eminent domain. The Cochituate Rail Trail project continues to make progress. The corridor has been leveled and cleared and is now open to the public as an informal hiking area. The design is being revised to have an interim terminus at Willow Street, about 1000 feet north of the Natick Center MBTA station. A future direct connection to Natick Center will be designed when the commuter station itself is redesigned in the coming years.
- + **Pumping Station:** In April of 2014, Town Meeting transferred the large parcel of land under control of the DPW (used for a water pumping station) to the Conservation Commission, protecting the land and offering the opportunity for public trails.
- + **Sudbury & Cochituate Aqueducts:** On May 22, 2012 the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority announced it would begin making its aqueducts available for public walking trails. Natick quickly secured permits to use both the Sudbury and Cochituate Aqueducts.
- + **New Conservation Restrictions (CRs):** As of the 2012 Open Space Plan, private landowners granted three new conservation restrictions (CRs), totaling about 37 acres.
- + **New Conservation Land:** Natick received six acres of conservation land as part of the Walnut Hills Estate Development, and a 16-acre conservation restriction as part of the South Natick Hills development.



MWRA Historic Map of Sudbury and Cochituate Aqueducts



Sudbury Aqueduct



Natick Trail Days Cleanup

- + **Conservation Commission Parklands:** The Town transferred to the Conservation Commission custody of four Town-owned parklands, ensuring their permanent protection: Pine Hill (Oak and Winter Streets), Natick Community Organic Farm, Hunnewell Town Forest, and J.J. Lane Park.
- + **Arthur Morency Woods:** In a similar action, the Town of Framingham transferred to its Conservation Commission custody of Arthur Morency Woods, which is owned by Framingham, but 16 acres of which are located in Natick.

Open Space Trail And Accessibility Actions

The Town holds Annual Trail Days to improve trail and open space property. Recent Annual Natick Trails Day efforts have included:

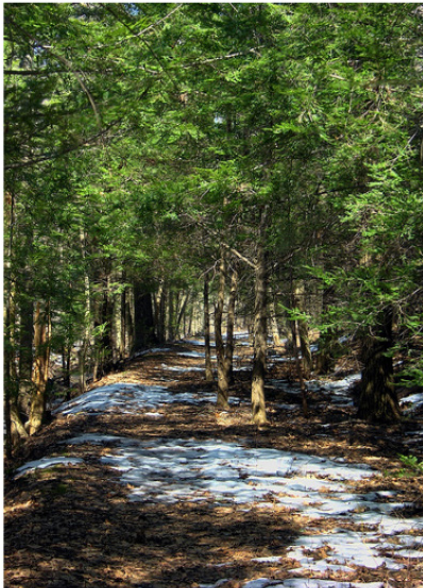
- + Oct. 22, 2016 - Development of new trail segment at the Cochituate Aqueduct. The trail is now open from Rathburn Road to the Wellesley Town Line, where it joins Wellesley Trails and crosses through the Town of Wellesley.
- + Oct. 17, 2015 - Grade improvement and clearing of Henry Wilson Trail.
- + Oct. 18, 2014 - Cleanup of Timothy Coolidge Hill, and installation of kiosks at three locations.
- + Oct. 19, 2013 - Kiosk installation and continued improvements to Hunnewell Town Forest.
- + Oct. 20, 2012 - Improvements to Morse Pond trails.
- + Oct. 22, 2011 - Erosion controls and other improvements to Hunnewell Town Forest.
- + Oct. 23, 2010 - Clearing and cleanup of Eisenmenger Trail.



Lilja Elementary School Informational Trail Signage

NATICK TRAILS

Hunnewell Town Forest



Hunnewell Map Brochure

Other recent actions include:

- + In 2016 the Board of Selectmen formally named and mapped many of the “paper streets” being used informally as pedestrian connectors.
- + In 2015, the Conservation Commission purchased a strip of land on Oak Street to provide access to the Pine Hill area.
- + Using a combination of Town-owned land and easements from developers, the Town completed the 1.5-mile Eisenmenger Trail from Natick Center to South Natick.
- + Many additional trails were completed, including in the Mumford Wildlife Forest (part of the 16-mile Charles River Link Trail), Timothy Coolidge Hill, the Henry Wilson History Trail, Annballi Park at Pegan Cove, and several parts of the Takawampait Trail.
- + A boardwalk was completed in 2011 by the developer of Sanctuary Estates between Whispering Lane and Woodleigh Road.
- + OSAC has explored installation of a trail from the Community-Senior Center along wetlands to Union Street, to be planned at part of Community-Senior Center Open Space design, funded by 2016 Fall Annual Town Meeting.
- + OSAC has explored installation of a trail between Highland and Bacon Streets on land given to the Conservation Commission as part of Walnut Hill Estates development.

Open Space and Recreation Awareness Actions

- + The Town Forest Committee developed an updated map of the Town Forest in 2014.
- + OSAC, working with the Trails Maintenance Committee and the Community Development Office, developed maps of seven other parts of Town, mapping a total of 16 trail areas. These maps were put online at <http://natickma.gov/448/Trail-Maps> in August 2016, linking to Town web pages for all trails-related committees and were showcased at Natick Days in September 2016.
- + OSAC is working with Natick GIS to incorporate all trail updates into an attractive trail map of the whole town. Currently the only publicly displayed physical map of the parks is on the stairs in Town Hall.
- + The Town Forest Committee created a website to showcase Hunnewell Town Forest, <http://naticktownforest.org/>.
- + OSAC runs an active Facebook Group entitled Natick Open Space, with over 200 members, giving the OSAC and public a chance to share formal and informal information about open space. Other groups with Facebook Pages include: Natick Trails Maintenance Committee, Cochituate Rail Trail, FIDO of Natick, Friends of Natick Trails, and The Trustees of the Reservation. The Town Forest Committee has a separate web site, <http://naticktownforest.org/>.



J.J. Lane Park



Community Gardens at J.J. Lane Park

- + Since 2011, new information kiosks have been installed at Hunnewell Town Forest (Oak St.), Timothy Coolidge Hill, Middlesex Path (Middlesex Ave.), and Eisenmenger Trail (Memorial School). Rain hoods have been added to existing kiosks at Coolidge Field, Coolidge Hill, Hunnewell Town Forest (Bacon St.), Middlesex Path (West Central St.), and Mumford Wildlife Forest.

Amenity Space and Recreation Field Actions

- + 2016 Fall Annual Town Meeting approved funding for a design study for the field adjacent to the new Community-Senior Center, and a study committee is expected to be established shortly.
- + After an extensive public design process, the new J.J. Lane Park held a “soft opening” on May 26, 2014, and a formal dedication on April 26, 2015. This park truly provides something for everyone, with playground, walking trails, picnic areas, informal lawn play, etc.
- + Community Gardens are open at J.J. Lane Park and on Hartford Street. Areas for additional community gardens are being considered as covered in the Parks and Fields Master Plan.
- + The OSAC heard from many people about the need for a dog park, and held a public forum on Oct. 10, 2013. The meeting led to the formation of a citizens’ group called FIDO (Fun, Informed Dog Owners) of Natick, which researched possible sites and possible grant funding, and conducted fundraising. The Town’s Office of Community & Economic Development is contracting for a full design and applying for funding from the Stanton Foundation.
- + Two new fields were opened near Lilja School: Sargent Field and MathWorks Field.

Open Space Administration/Policy Actions

- + In November of 2015, Town Meeting transferred most of the Conservation Fund into a new “FAR Bonus Stabilization Fund,” with the same general purpose of acquiring open space, but managed by Town Meeting instead of the Conservation Commission.
- + Town Meeting adopted a number of Zoning By-Laws that include requirements for open space (e.g., Comprehensive Cluster Development Option) or pocket parks (Housing Overlay Option Plan, HOOP) and the Smart Growth Overlay District (Chapter 40R) Program which also has requirements for improvements to public open space.
- + In 2014 the Town Administrator created a new position for Sustainability Coordinator to work on natural resource protection issues.

Open Space and Recreation Funding Actions

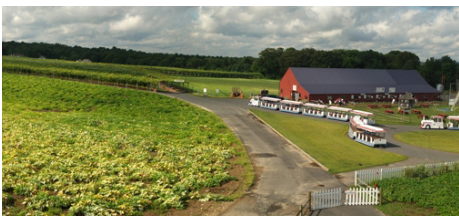
- + As a result of the Natick Mall expansion, the Town received \$7.2 million in mitigation funds for the Conservation Fund, plus an additional \$500,000 toward the Cochituate Rail Trail.



Town Center Green



Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary



Lookout Farm

Existing Conditions/Facilities

Existing Open Space

The Town of Natick currently has approximately 2,283 acres of combined public and private open space land area and roughly an additional 700 acres of surface water within its boundaries (surface water boundaries fluctuate regularly based on precipitation and tides). This area is displayed on the Existing Open Space Map and covers approximately 23 percent of the land area of Natick. Of this total about half is owned by the Town of Natick, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or abutting towns. As noted above, there have been a few recent acquisitions of open space lands for trails and contiguous open space which have been included in this total. Due to the well distributed nature of the open space around the Town, nearly ninety percent of the land area of Natick is within one quarter mile of a public open space¹. However, while proximity to open space is a strength of the Town, many residents have called for better connectivity of these spaces both to each other and to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. A more detailed analysis of the access to existing open space entrances confirmed this issue, as less than half of the Town is within a quarter mile of a formal park or open space entrance². Future efforts towards conservation and public acquisitions should focus on goals of connectivity. Additionally, there are still a few residential nodes throughout Town that are not within a quarter mile of any public open space, and opportunities to extend access to these areas should be also be considered in future efforts.

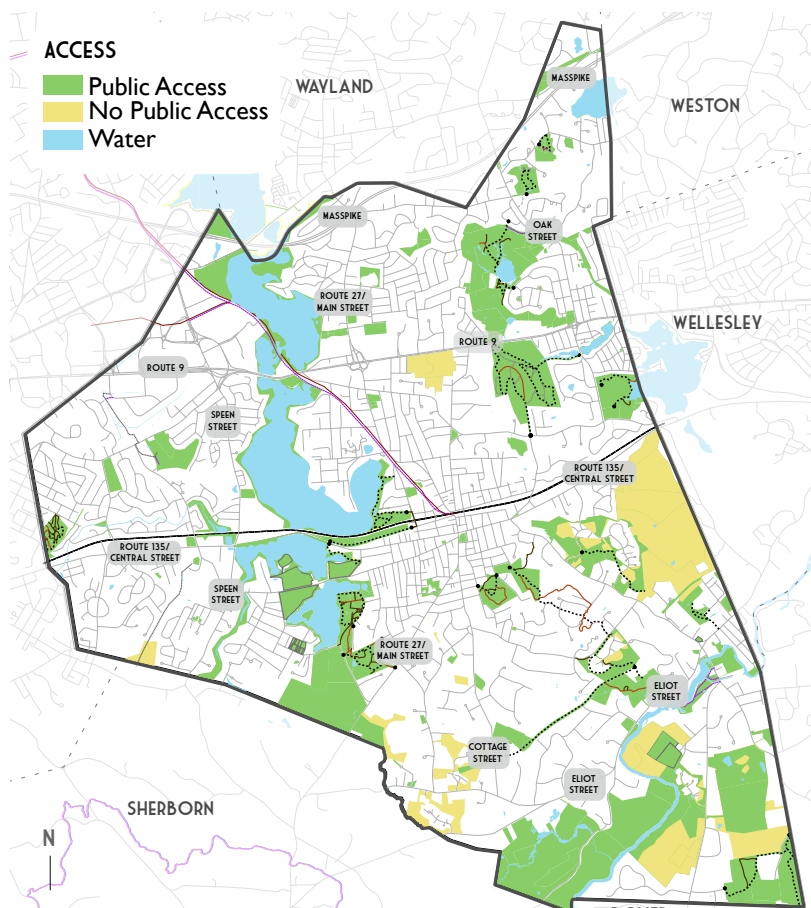
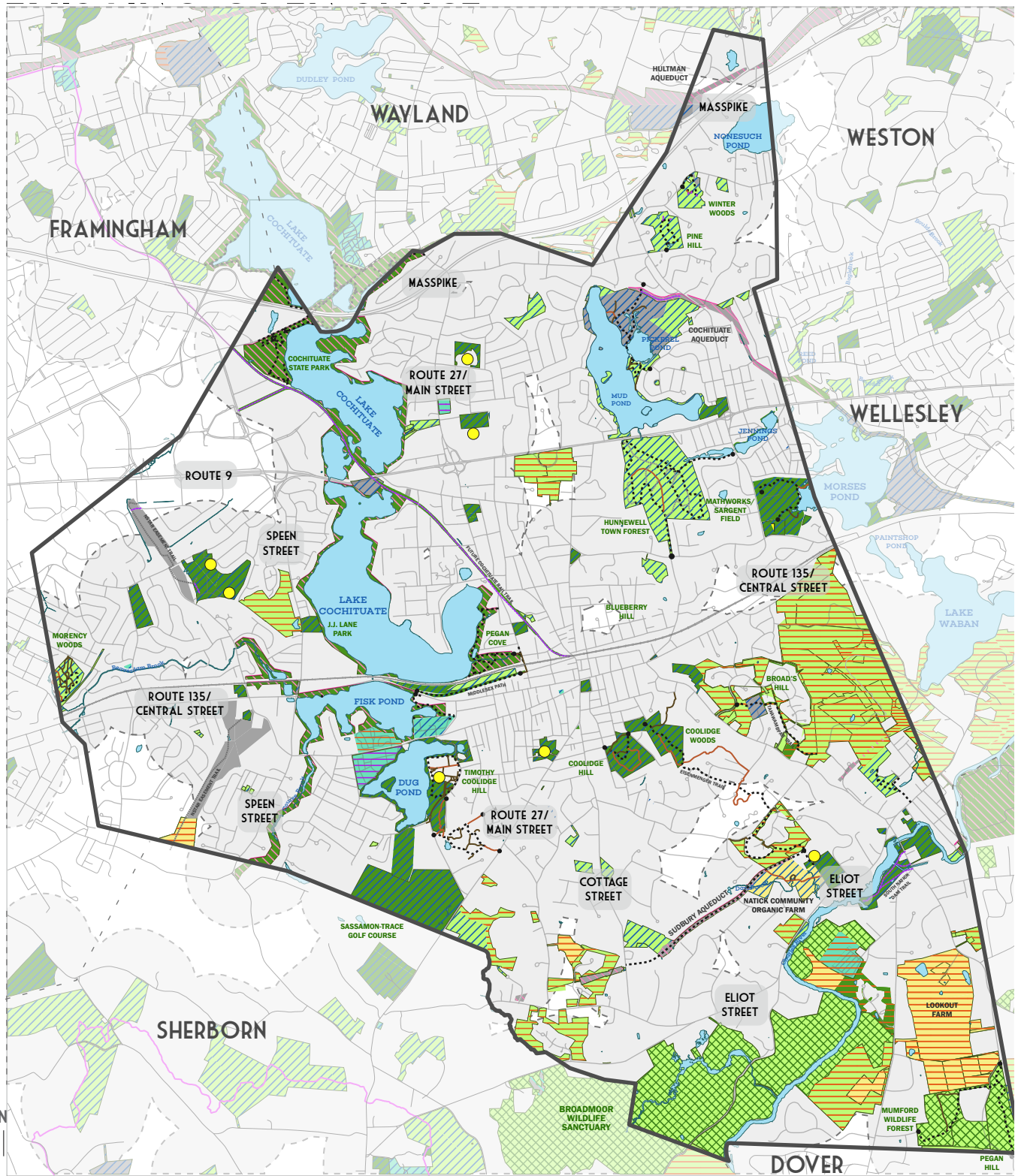


FIGURE 7.1 PUBLIC/PRIVATE ACCESS

- 1 As calculated from the total area of a ¼ mile offset from the edges of all publicly available open space. See the Existing Open Space Map for delineated boundary.
- 2 The calculated total came to approximately 46% of the Town area. The total area was determined by analyzing the total reach of a ¼ mile radial distance centered on each park entrance and trail head.



- LEGEND**
- | | |
|---|------------------|
| PRIMARY PURPOSE | OWNERSHIP |
| Recreation | Land Trust |
| Recreation & Conservation | Municipal |
| Conservation | Non-Profit |
| Historical/Cultural | Private |
| Agriculture | State |
| Utility | |
| Water | |
| Neighborhoods within 1/4 Mile of Publicly Accessible Open Space | |

- | |
|-------------------|
| TRAILS |
| Main Trail |
| Minor Trail |
| Alternative Trail |
| Rail Trail |
| Proposed Trail |
| Unmarked Trail |
| Other Town Trail |
| Trail Head |
| School |



MAP 7.1 EXISTING OPEN SPACE
 Source: Natick Assessing Department data and MassGIS.

OPEN SPACE TYPE	OSRP 2012 (ACRES)	NATICK 2030+ (ACRES)
Town of Natick Conservation Commission	402	428 (incl. 12 water acres)
Town of Natick Recreation and Parks Department	203	204 (incl. 0.6 water acres)
Town of Natick/Other	60	66
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	387	708 (incl. 498 water acres) ^a
Other Town Lands	21	21
Non-Profit, APR and other lands under Article 97 protection	700	665 (incl. 13 water acres)
Conservation Restrictions	286	(475 acres of land carry a conservation restriction – the actual restricted acreage information was unavailable for this plan)
Private Cemeteries	90	76
Total Well-Protected Land	2,149	2,168^b
Chapter 61, 61A, 61B	467	578
Schools/Playgrounds	240	246
Total Limited Protection Land	707	824^c

TABLE 7.1 OPEN SPACE TOTAL AREA BY TYPE

As part of the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, much of the open space within Natick was identified, categorized, and tabulated. Building on that effort, this 2030+ Master Plan has combined those tables with the Town of Natick’s Assessors Database to create an ongoing database of current and future parcel acquisitions and protections that can be tracked alongside the Town Assessor’s parcel data. The full table is found in the Plan Appendix. Minor variations in acreage were observed as a result of the data merge, but much of this is assumed to be due to variations in calculations for surface water/wetland area, methodology or partial area restrictions. The final comparison is presented in Table 7.1. One notable variation is the total acreage for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which is primarily composed of Cochituate State Park land area. The discrepancy is presumed to be caused by a variation in methodology used for subtracting the surface water area of Lake Cochituate. For clarity, the total surface water acres calculated has been included in the table.

^a There is a large discrepancy in the OSRP 2012 total acreage and area calculated for Natick 2030+. The discrepancy may be due to variation in the calculated boundary for Lake Cochituate. See Appendix for calculation methodology. The calculated total came to approximately 46% of the Town area. The total area was determined by analyzing the total reach of a ¼ mile radial distance centered on each park entrance and trail head.

^b Total does not include Conservation Restriction acreage.

^c Some overlap in total acreage occurs between the categories for “Well Protected” and “Limited Protection Lands”. See the Level of Protection Map for parcels falling under both designations.

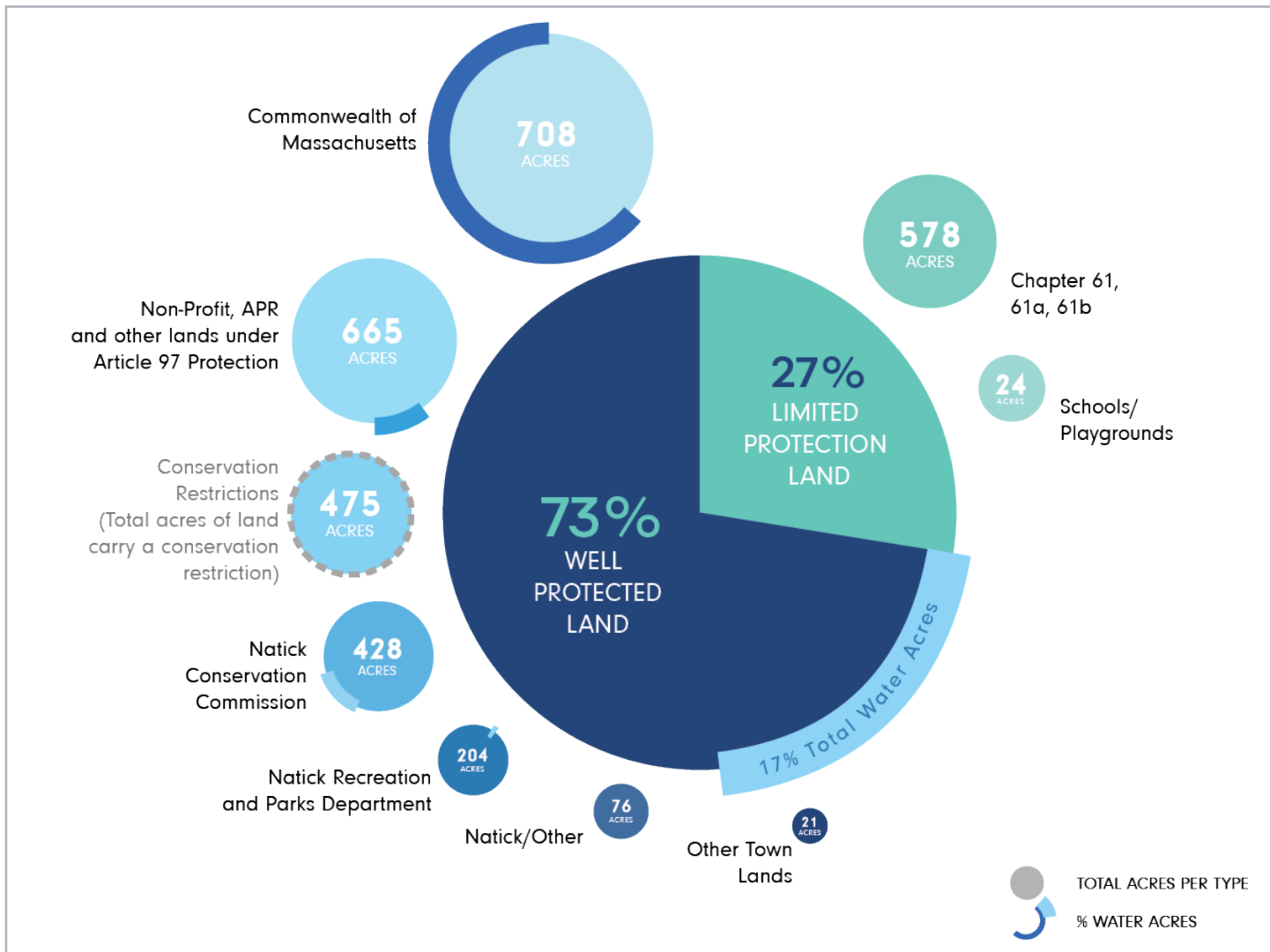


FIGURE 7.2 OPEN SPACE DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE



Cochituate State Park



Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary

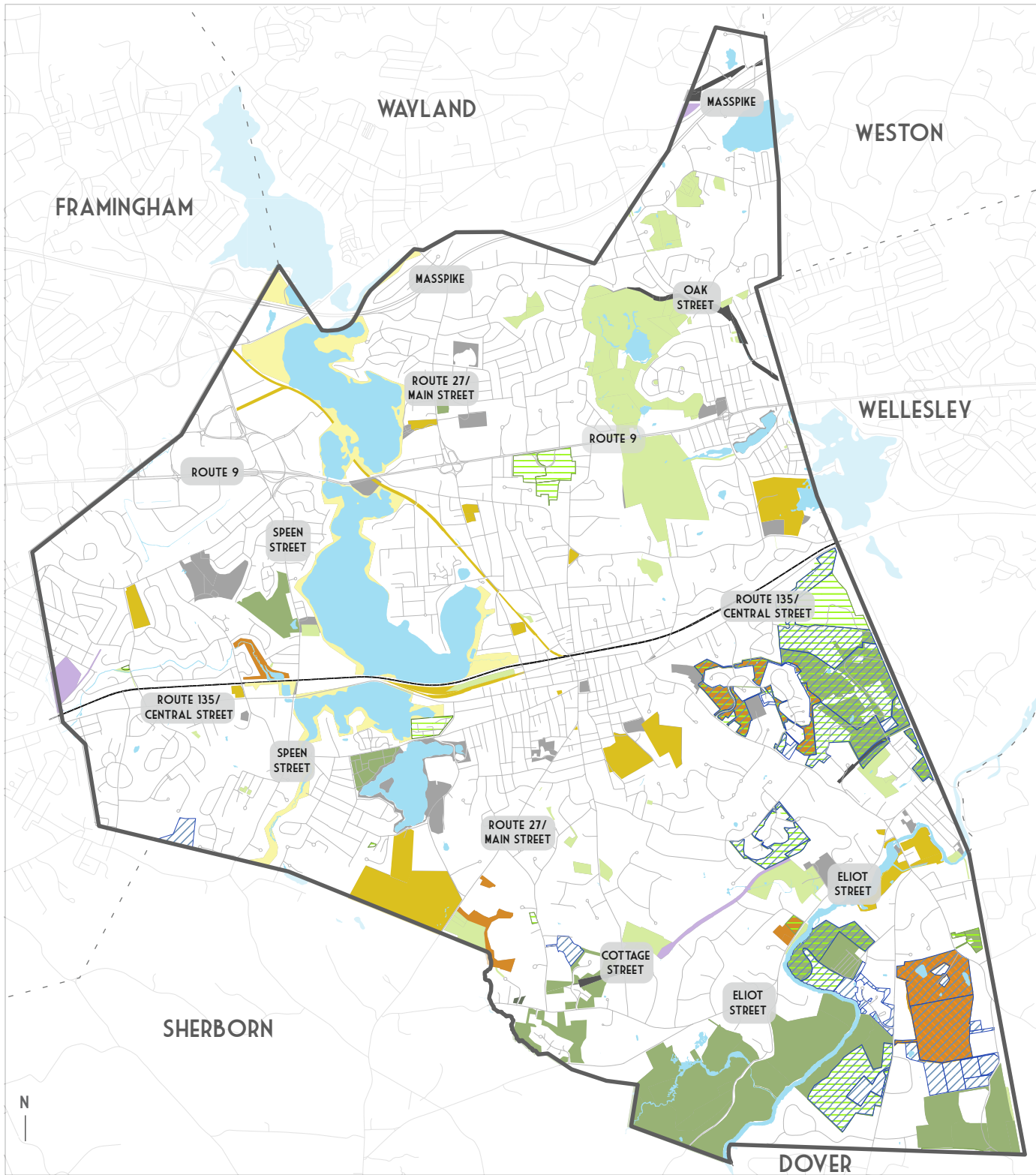


Belkin Family Lookout Farm

Table 7.1 Open Space Total by Area Type is divided into two categories, “Well Protected Land” and “Limited Protection Land.” Level of Protection is shown on Map 7.2. The “Well Protected Land” category falls under the ownership of the Town of Natick, an adjacent Town ownership, the Natick Conservation Commission, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or a non-profit ownership such as the Trustees of the Reservation. It is characterized as well protected by the fact that, except for in special exceptions where the land may be sold by the public agency into private ownership, the primary purpose of the land and its managing agency is to keep the land open and available for public use in perpetuity. Much of this land falls under Massachusetts Article 97, which grants the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions the right to acquire conservation easements. Article 97 was intended to be a legislative ‘check’ to ensure that lands acquired for conservation purposes were not converted to other inconsistent uses.

The other categories of land ownership/restriction that fall within this category are parcels with Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR), Conservation Restrictions (CR), and private cemeteries. The APR program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the “fair market value” and the “agricultural value” of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. A Conservation Restriction (CR) limits future development by transferring some rights in property, such as the right to construct new buildings, from the landowner to a nonprofit organization or a governmental entity for conservation purposes. In most cases both of these programs restrict development in perpetuity and are again considered well-protected classifications. Finally, private cemeteries, while held in private ownership, must follow state law for closure and transfer and are considered well protected in their existing use.

The “Limited Protection Lands” encompass land protected by the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs and land currently used for schools. The Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs provide tax breaks for land in forestry, agricultural or recreation use, respectively, in return for a commitment from the landowner to continue those uses. This is a voluntary program and the restriction is lifted if the landowner chooses to withdraw from the program and pay retroactive taxes. There is no guarantee of term or longevity of protection from this program. Similarly, while school buildings and grounds are Town owned, their availability for open space is determined more by the needs of the primary use as an educational facility; the land is subject to changes through school building expansion, demolition, or relocation projects. Because of these external factors, both of these open space categories are characterized as Limited Protection Lands.



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LEVEL OF PROTECTION

- Well Protected by Management
 - Non-Profit Owned
 - Conservation Comm. Owned
- Well Protected by Article 97
 - State Owned
 - Municipal Owned
 - Private/Non-Profit Owned
 - Unknown Article 97 Protection

- Well Protected by Restriction
 - Agricultural Preservation Restriction
 - Conservation Restrictions
- Limited Protection by Status/Restriction
 - Chapter 61, 61A, 61B Status
 - Municipal Owned - No Protection
 - State Owned - No Protection



MAP 7.2 OPEN SPACE BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION



From top left counterclockwise:
 J.J. Lane Park, Natick High School South Complex, Mary Bunker Park, Mary Bunker Park, Cole Center.

Recreational Amenities

The Town of Natick offers a variety of active and passive recreational amenities throughout its publicly and privately held open spaces, twenty-nine town-owned recreational facilities and the Sassamon Trace Golf Course, located on the border of Sherborn at Route 27 and West Street. Map 7.3 illustrates the currently available active/passive recreation and team sport facilities available throughout the town.

Active Recreation

As part of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields, an in-depth needs assessment was completed for recreational facilities in the Town of Natick. Due to the in-depth nature of that recent analysis, this section will refer heavily to that report. The summary findings/conclusions of that report are as follows:

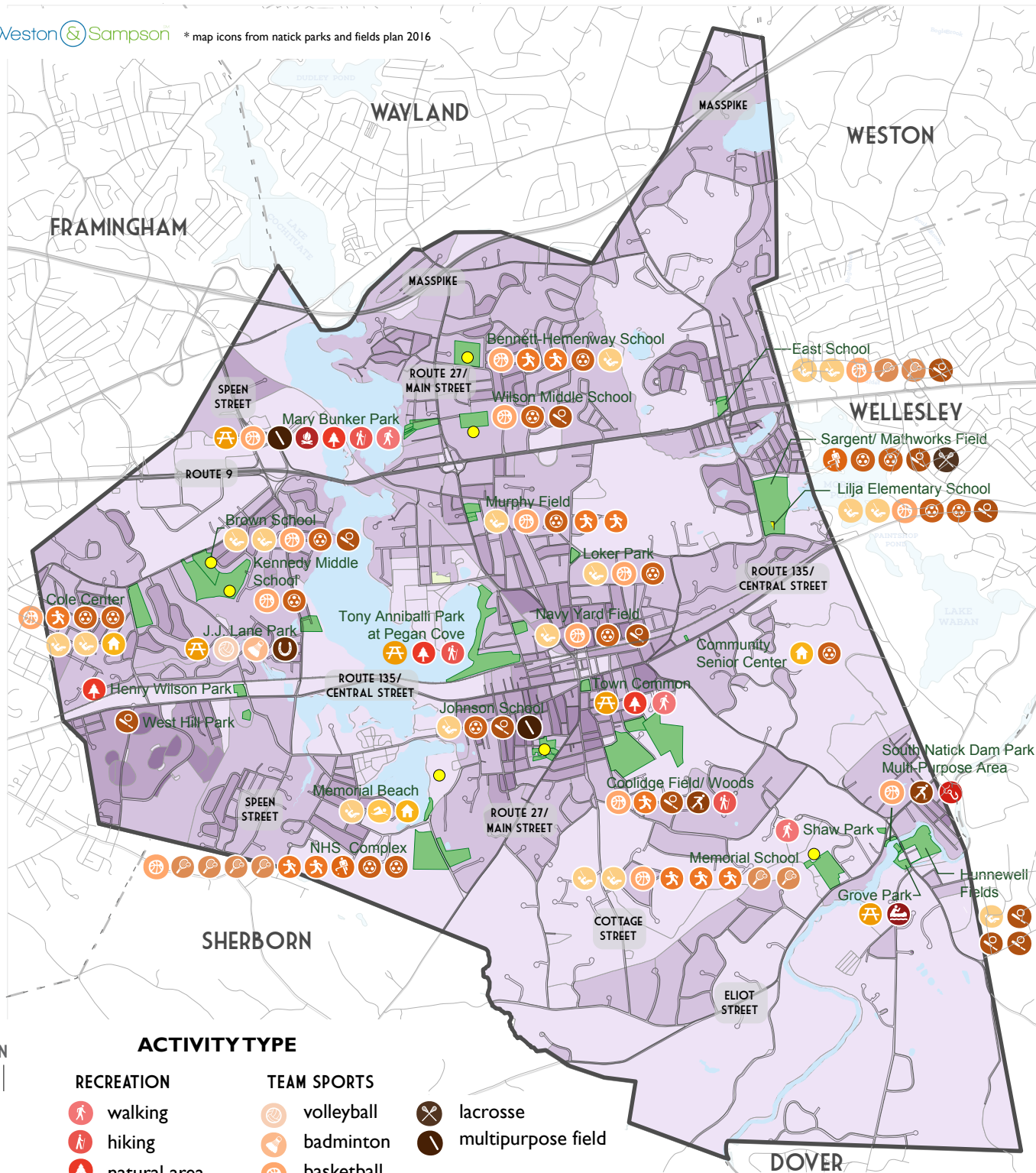
There Are Two Areas Of Town That Lack Recreational/Park Resources.

- + The northeast and southernmost sections of Natick lack recreational park resources.
- + Of the two, the northeast section is the most lacking, with East Park, one of the most dilapidated parks in Town, as the only recreational facility in that area.

There are insufficient playing venues to meet the increasing demands of the Natick community.

- + Turf conditions are stressed at many locations due to heavy and often excessive use during all seasons of the year and during all types of weather.
- + Natick athletes play on the Town's thirty fields (about 35 acres of athletic fields) in excess of 32,000 hours a year, which is an average of over 1,060 hours of use per field. In order to maintain proper field conditions, the total capacity of the Town's fields is 21,000 hours of use per year based on the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) standards; therefore, the Town uses their fields at more than 150% of their capacity.

Weston & Sampson * map icons from natick parks and fields plan 2016



ACTIVITY TYPE

RECREATION

- walking
- hiking
- natural area
- fishing
- campfire pits
- canoe launch
- picnic
- indoor facilities
- swimming
- playground

TEAM SPORTS

- volleyball
- badminton
- basketball
- tennis
- softball
- field hockey
- soccer
- baseball
- skating
- horseshoes

- lacrosse
- multipurpose field

POPULATION DENSITY

PERSONS PER ACRE
(2010 CENSUS BLOCK DATA)

- 0.0-2.0
- 2.1-8.0
- 8.1-15.0
- 15.1-30
- 30.1+

- school
- park
- water



LEGEND

MAP 7.3 RECREATIONAL AMENITIES INVENTORY



High School Athletics (above)

- + Current trends show an increase in lacrosse and soccer from 3,455 players in 2010 to 3,622 players in 2015 and a general increased interest in sports due to college admissions, and health and wellness concerns. The construction of new fields in Town has not kept pace with the increased participation levels.
- + Town maintenance and operations staff members, hampered by the growing number of park/field users and lack of facilities to accommodate the needs of these users, make decisions on how to best allocate maintenance funds and maintenance resources based on priority of need. Under this approach, some properties suffer, namely the Lilja Elementary School Little League Field, West Hill Park, Johnson School Field, and East Park Field. Despite current limitations, quality turf conditions have been achieved at several playing venues, such as the Sargent/MathWorks fields, the High School soccer/lacrosse and baseball field, Wilson Middle School Field, Cole South Field, Coolidge Park, and Murphy Field.
- + The needs assessment found that the Town lacks dedicated rectangular-shaped fields for the exclusive use of football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, and other similar athletic programs. Nine of the 17 rectangular-shaped fields in Town overlap with baseball, softball, or little league diamonds, and Town sports programs that require rectangular-shaped fields often make use of “multi-use” fields. The overlapping nature of these multi-use fields creates both scheduling and use conflicts if two activities occur at the same time, and puts facilities in extremely high demand during all playing seasons. Maintaining turf under these high-demand, multi-use conditions becomes a major challenge. Many sports programs at the recreational level currently play on private, leased land.
- + All of the Town schools use their respective athletic field facilities for extra-curricular sports, recess, and physical education classes in addition to scheduled practices and games. This intensive use wears on the condition of many of these fields. The Town needs another full-size baseball field for use by junior varsity (JV) baseball. Currently, the JV team plays at Wilson Middle School, but the site layout is not ideal because of sun orientation and the field’s proximity to abutters. In addition, Wilson Middle School representatives would prefer to see a more age-appropriate use of the field. A full-size baseball diamond does not meet the needs of a middle school; they would like to expand their

Images of Existing Cole Center (below)





Splash pad



Water fountain



Kayak facilities

rectangular field and add a little league field, which would better meet the needs of the school. If the Town can find a location for a new full-size baseball field, the current full-sized baseball field at the school could be converted to a more appropriate facility that includes both a multi-use rectangular field and a little league field.

- + The 2016 Master Plan calls for a total of 12 tennis courts. However, United States Tennis Association (USTA) industry standards call for 30 courts. The 2016 Master Plan suggests adding additional courts if new venues become available.
- + Many residents, users, and stakeholders expressed an interest in improving other ancillary facilities at the various playing field properties (e.g., support buildings, backstops, fencing, parking areas, sports lighting, irrigation, basketball courts, children’s playground equipment, etc.).

The general recreational amenity shortfalls at the Natick parks include:

- + Shade structures/picnic areas/seating
- + Signage – wayfinding, identification, and emergency information
- + Restroom and storage facilities
- + Drinking fountains / bottle-filling stations
- + Trail heads and connections to natural resources
- + Splash pads
- + Dog parks
- + Community gardens
- + Canoe/kayak launches (where applicable)

Recommendations for Improvements/Expansion

- + The 2016 Master Plan recommended 10 two-acre rectangular multi-use fields, one full-size baseball field, and two tennis courts to be located in the western and northwestern regions of Town, additional play areas on the eastern side of Town Center, and at least two new lighted basketball courts located generally within the Town limits.
- + The Town should look for opportunities to create new playing venues at alternate properties. Without new venues, the improved playing conditions will never be attained because the existing venues will continue to be overused at an ever increasing rate, further deteriorating conditions. However, since land is tight at all venues, realistic opportunities for field expansion at existing facilities are limited, which will force Town representatives to find other potential open space properties.



+ The Town should set aside funds to renovate existing facilities as new venues come online. Improvements can be accomplished through a traditional public design, bid, and construct process or through other creative means that provide cost benefits.

+ The Town should aggressively pursue other traditional state and federal funding sources for proposed renovations to reduce the financial burden on residents. The Town should also use local funding authorizations to leverage other funds from both public and private sources.



+ There are high levels of risk involved with continuing to operate some of the facilities in their current condition. Many facilities exhibit safety issues that include compacted turf, uneven playing surfaces, sharp protrusions on fencing, and trip hazards. It is important to protect the users of the recreational fields.

Passive Recreation

Passive recreation opportunities abound in Natick. This is partially a result of the very active Planning Board encouragement (since the 1970's) for developers to include open space, and specifically trails, into their developments. This was recognized several years ago when the still-incomplete trail system between South Natick and Natick Center was named the Eisenmenger Trail System, after long-time Planning Board member and trail advocate Bob Eisenmenger. This focus on passive recreational opportunities continues, with the enlarging and improvement of J.J. Lane Park, the current efforts of the Cochituate Rail Trail and Cochituate Aqueduct (Trail) Study Committees, and the Planning Board's continuing focus on the creation of trails.



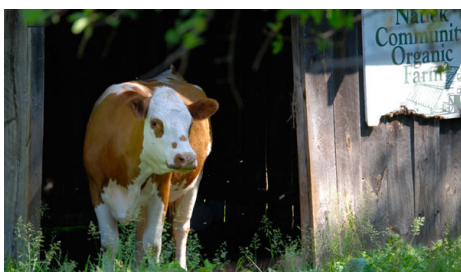
Equitable Access to Parks/Open Space

Although Natick is not included on a list of communities that include environmental justice populations, a small portion of western Natick, abutting Framingham in the area of Morency Wood, is shown on a state map as being an environmental justice area (http://www.mass.gov/mgis/ej_boston_metro.pdf). In general, the major open space and recreation resources are fairly well distributed in Town. Cochituate State Park is in the northwest section, Broadmoor in South Natick and Hunnewell Town Forest in the east. The western and northern parts have fewer recreational amenities than other parts of Town. The water quality in Lake Cochituate has become an important environmental equity issue due to the number of people who use its fish as a part of their diets.

The 2016 Master Plan recommends adding more rectangular multi-use fields, a baseball field, and more tennis courts as part of Town facilities upgrades (above)



Belkin Family Lookout Farm



Natick Community Organic Farm

Agricultural Land

Two plots of scenic agricultural land in Natick offer particular recreational opportunities to the public. The Belkin Family Lookout Farm is one of the oldest working farms in the country. The farm was originally established in 1651 by Natick's original settlers with John Eliot. Since then, it had been owned and managed by eight different families and individuals until Steve and Joan Belkin purchased it in July 2005. In addition to its scenic views and agricultural value, the farm also hosts events and entertainment sessions, offers seasonal pick-your-own fruits and vegetables, features a hard cider taproom open year-round, and includes a children's play area complete with a livestock petting zoo. While open to residents and visitors throughout the season (for an entrance fee), the farm is privately owned and operated and is only partially protected under the Chapter 61A program. Continued public access to this large agricultural parcel will continue to be determined by farm functions and offerings provided by the owners.

The non-profit Natick Community Organic Farm in South Natick was founded in 1974 on Town-owned land and has produced organic crops ever since. Additionally, it provides open space and educational opportunities for the public. Its educational emphasis is on year-round classes for youth. In 2009 the Town transferred ownership of the property to the Conservation Commission, ensuring its permanent protection as open space.

Today, the owners of several large farms are considering options for the future, including sale and redevelopment. As part of the efforts of the Town to strengthen connections to existing open space and promote the conservation of important ecological corridors, these parcels should be reviewed and assessed as they become available to determine if strong conservation restrictions or acquisition would contribute to the Town's network of open space.

CHAPTER 61, 61A, 61B

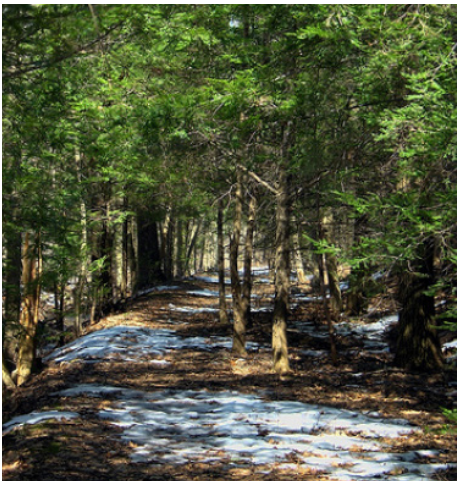
Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs provide tax breaks for land in forestry, agricultural or recreation use, respectively, in return for a commitment to continue those uses and allow the Town a right of first refusal to purchase the properties prior to any change in use. Since the properties can be released from these requirements upon the payment of back taxes, they are not considered to be permanently protected. The 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan reported 467 acres in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs. Based on calculations from the 2016 Assessor's Database for the listed parcels, a total of 441 acres was calculated for this plan in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs; this variation is negligible. The 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan noted that some of the calculated acreage was included in the conservation restrictions, and this may account for the discrepancy.



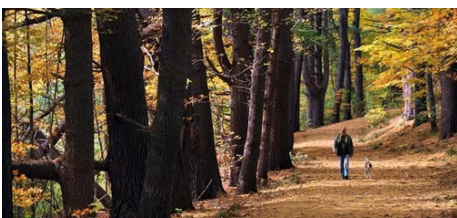
Cochituate State Park



Broadmore Wildlife Sanctuary



Hunnewell Town Forest



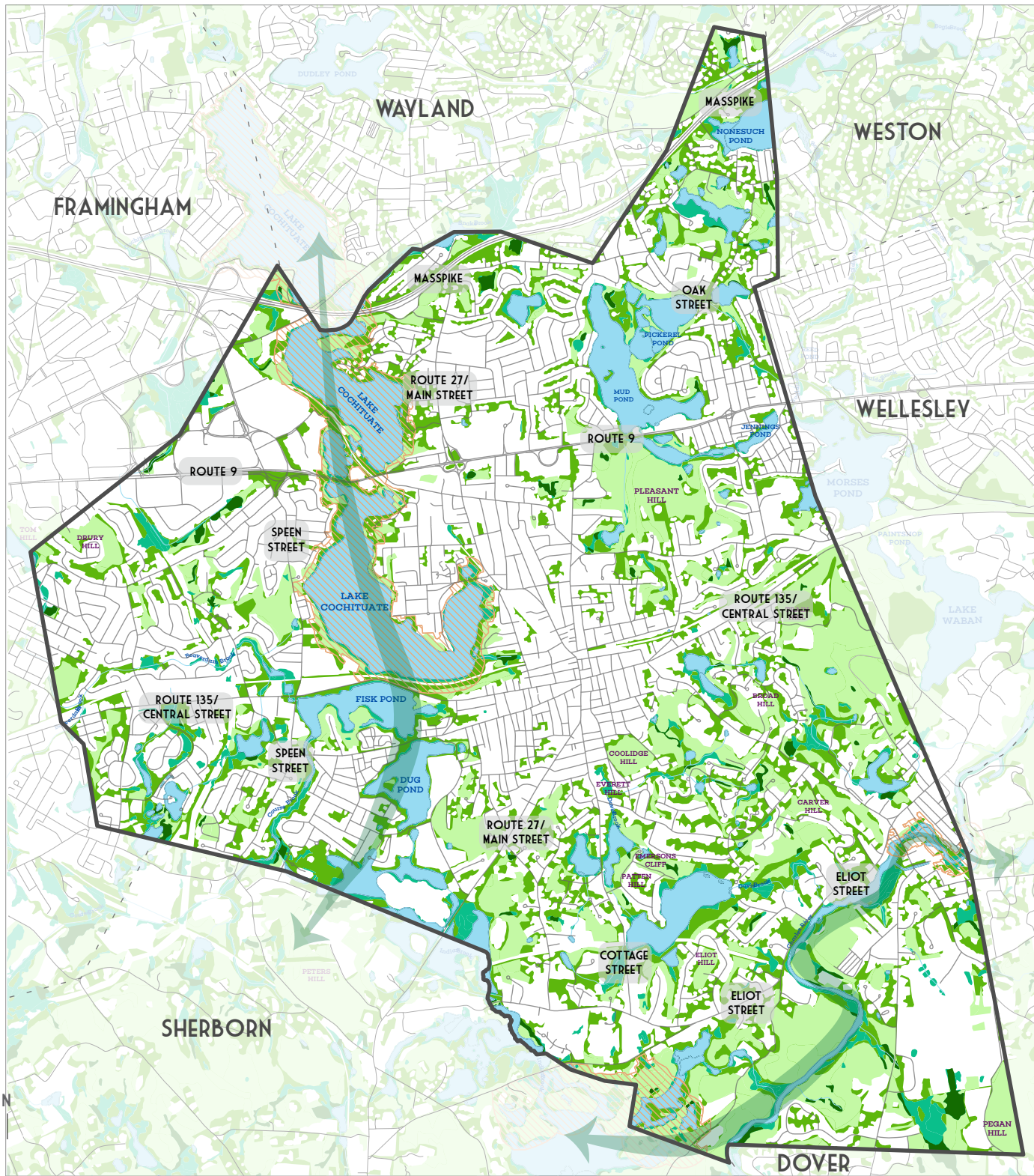
Pegan Hill Reservation

Natural Resources

Nestled between the upper basins of the Charles and Sudbury Rivers in Middlesex County, Natick has a great variety of natural landscapes including forests, hills, river valleys (including several lakes, ponds, rivers and streams), and open agricultural lands. Among its variety of natural resource offerings, Natick contains a number of large open spaces that serve as significant natural resources to the area.

- + Cochituate State Park, managed by the state’s Department of Conservation and Recreation, consists of over 1100 acres, including Lake Cochituate itself and the land surrounding the lake. Two of the lake’s three “ponds” are located in Natick, while the northern pond lies in Framingham and Wayland.
- + The Broadmore Wildlife Sanctuary, owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, consists of 735 acres plus another 165 acres under conservation restriction. Most of this area is within Natick, the remainder in Sherborn. It has 9 miles of walking trails through a variety of habitats, as well as a universally accessible trail. It provides a venue for hiking, birdwatching, photography, cross-country skiing and other activities, and offers year-round access.
- + There are currently 200 acres of private land held in conservation restrictions on the border of Wellesley near Lake Waban. It is a goal of the Town to keep this area in conservation. The area contains the Takawampait Trail which is planned for expansion. The expansion has not been accomplished to date due to difficulties in negotiating several easements across private property.
- + The 98 acre Hunnewell Town Forest descends from Walnut Hill to Route 9 where it connects with the 156 acre Sunkaway/Pickerel Pond wetland area. The Sunkaway is a low wetlands area fed by Sunkaway Brook that is crossed by Route 9. This area contains approximately 4 miles of hiking trails
- + Pegan Hill Reservation, a 52-acre property managed by The Trustees of Reservations, is located in Dover and Natick. A glacial drumlin, its thickly wooded habitat is laced by remnant stone walls. It is open year-round, from sunrise to sunset, and has a one-mile walking trail. To date, including the recent parcel acquisition by the Trustees of the Reservation and adjoining land of the New England Forestry Foundation, over 100 contiguous acres has been acquired, protected, and made available for the public’s use and enjoyment. These properties contain Natick’s highest elevation, with unmatched scenic views of Mount Monadnock to the northeast and the Blue Hills to the east.

There are also several smaller conservation parcels that range in size from 12 to 17 acres including Pine Hill, Winter Woods, and Morency Woods. Morency Woods spans Natick and Framingham and is under the control of the Framingham Conservation Commission.



LEGEND

- Prime Forest
- Forest Land Use
- Prime 3 Wetlands
- Water
- Wetlands
- Priority Habitat
- Potential Wildlife Corridor



MAP 7.4 NATURAL RESOURCES



Charles River at South Natick Dam



Beach-goers at Cochituate State Park



Boating at Cochituate State Park

Water Resources

Water bodies and wetland areas cover approximately 13.5 percent of the Town's total area. A nearly continuous chain of lakes and wetlands extends through the town, from north to south. The northeastern corner of Natick is dominated by the low-lying Sunkaway area around Pickerell Pond and Nonesuch Pond. Many smaller low-lying wetland areas are scattered throughout the town.

Watersheds

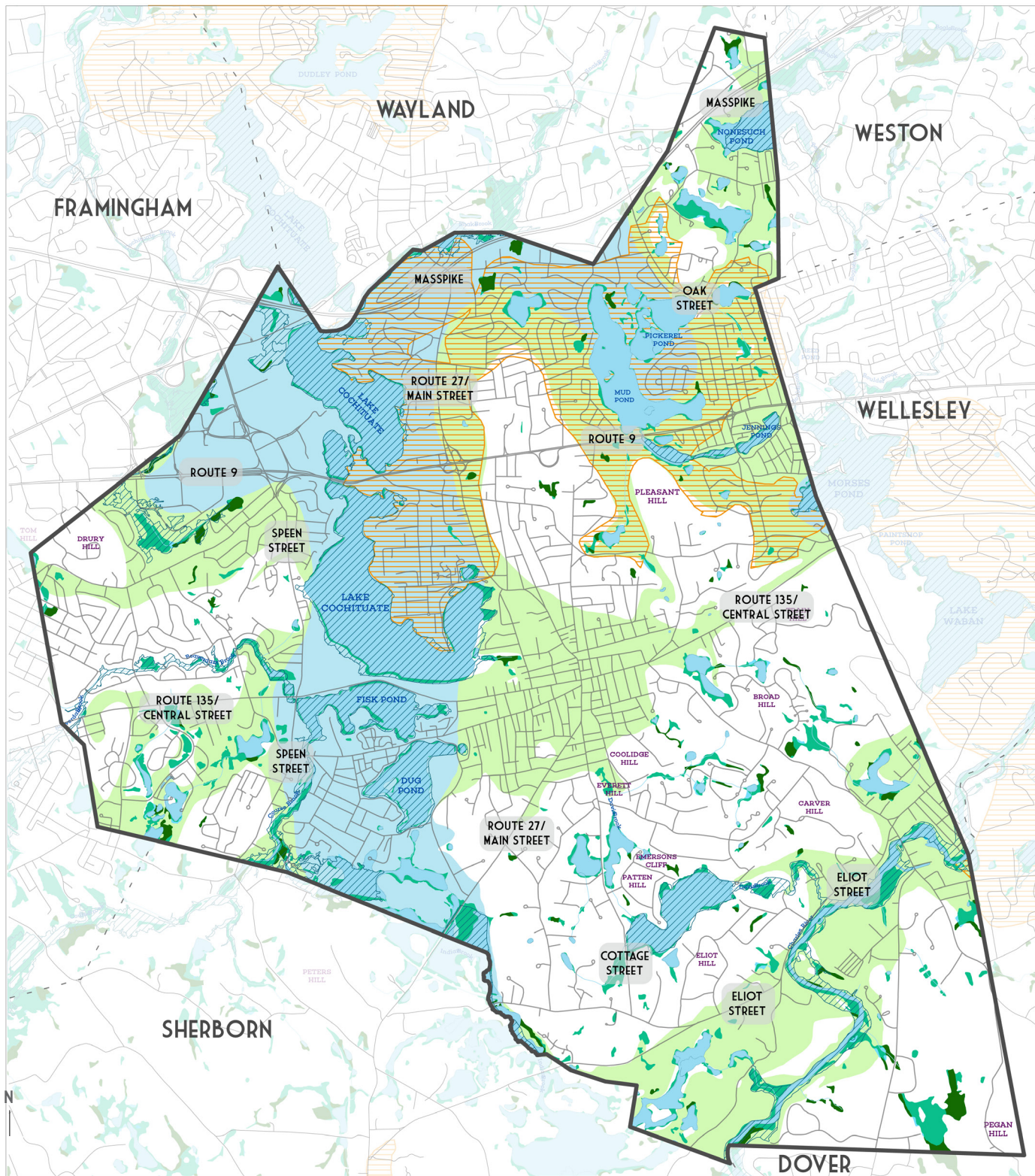
Natick is divided in half with two watersheds: the Charles River, which drains the eastern and southern portions of the town, and the SuAsCo (Sudbury-Assabet-Concord), which drains the western and northern portions of town. These drainages are classified as Class B waters under Massachusetts regulations (314 CMR 4.05). Class B waters are designated as a habitat for fish, other aquatic life, and wildlife, including for their reproduction, migration, growth and other critical functions, and for primary and secondary contact recreation. Class B waters are also suitable for irrigation and other agricultural uses and for compatible industrial cooling and process uses. Based on State regulation, these waters must consistently have good aesthetic value.

The Charles River passes through the southeastern corner of Natick. Major sub-basins within the Charles River watershed consist of Indian Brook (including Dug Pond), Davis Brook, and Jennings Pond (which includes the Sunkaway region and Pickerell Pond). Natick's portion of the SuAsCo watershed includes Lake Cochituate and Fisk Pond, with their tributary basins of Beaverdam Brook, Course Brook, Pegan Brook and Snake Brook.

Surface Water

Water bodies and associated wetlands in Natick comprise a total of 1,287 acres of the Town's gross acreage. The largest water body is Lake Cochituate, which covers roughly 440 acres within Natick. Lake Cochituate is part of a chain of water bodies running north to south in Natick which also includes Fisk Pond, Dug Pond, and the Indian Brook drainage. This chain continues through the southern portion of Natick along the Charles River corridor.

Surface waters in Natick provide many recreational opportunities. Lakes, ponds and rivers offer fishing, swimming and boating. They are often surrounded by scenic walking trails with particularly good areas for bird and animal watching. The Charles River has a boat launch at the South Natick Dam that is often used by canoeists. Cochituate State Park encompasses all of Lake Cochituate and Fisk Pond and provides swimming, boating, and picnicking opportunities. The Town maintains a swimming beach at Dug Pond.



- LEGEND**
- Aquifer
 - Aquifer Recharge Areas
 - Charles River Basin
 - Concord River Basin
 - 100 Year Floodplain
 - Zone II Wellhead Protection Areas
 - Water



MAP 7.5 WATER RESOURCES



South Natick Dam on the Charles River



Beach at Dug Pond

Impaired Water Bodies

According to the MassDEP Division of Watershed Management Watershed Planning Program 2014 Integrated List of Waters (305(b)/303(d)), the following bodies of water are listed with impairments:

- + Lake Cochituate - Impaired with a TMDL in place
- + Charles River - Impaired with a TMDL in place
- + Fisk Pond - Impaired, not caused by pollutant
- + Dug Pond - Impaired, not caused by pollutant
- + Morses Pond (Wellesley) - Impaired, not caused by pollutant
- + Jennings Pond - Attainment for some uses/other uses not assessed

Jennings Pond has been reported as an impaired water body on each EPA report since 2002, but was listed in the most recent report as having attained aesthetic standards, while other uses were not assessed. Lake Cochituate has also appeared on the report each year since 2002 and is contaminated by organic enrichment/oxygen depletion, pathogens and toxic organics. The Charles River has a more extensive presence on the impaired water bodies list. It has appeared on each report since 1998, and is contaminated by noxious aquatic plants, nutrients, organic enrichment/oxygen depletion, pathogens, toxic organics and turbidity north of the South Natick Dam. South of the dam, it is impaired by metals, noxious aquatic plants, nutrients, organic enrichment/oxygen depletion, pathogens, turbidity and unknown toxicity. Fiske Pond, Dug Pond and Morse Pond are all listed for impairments caused by non-native aquatic plants.

Ongoing efforts to improve the condition of these impaired bodies are extremely important. The Army's effort to remove sedimentation from Lake Cochituate, completed in 2010, is a strong first step in cleaning that water body. The Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) continuously works to develop strategies to clean the river. In 1995, the CWRA's research convinced the EPA to launch a plan to restore the Charles to fishable and swimmable conditions by 2005. Water quality has significantly improved through wastewater treatment and the elimination of contaminated discharges. The goal has been met along most of the river but some areas remain in need of improvement.

IMPAIRED WATER BODIES TMDL

A TMDL is a pollution budget and includes a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that can occur in a waterbody and allocates the necessary reductions to one or more pollutant sources. Under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states, territories and authorized tribes (included in the term State here) are required to submit lists of impaired waters. The law requires that the states establish priority rankings for waters on the lists and develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for these waters.

Aquifer Recharge Areas

The main aquifer generally bisects the Town's subsurface from north to south, links to the north with Wayland and stretches over to Weston, to the east to Framingham then south, to Sherborn. The recharge areas are typically found in the second concentric circle around the aquifer area, but often sporadically shift. With a particular interest in aquifer protection, the Town retains an interest in the protection of Elm Bank in Dover, where one of Natick's town wells is located.

AQUIFER PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Town of Natick Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APD), Zoning Bylaw 9.2, (<http://www.natickma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/80>) protects existing and potential groundwater supply recharge areas within the Town. This regulation applies to all land uses within the overlay district; however, a special exception is made for residentially used lots in the RS and RG Districts. The APD specifies both prohibited uses, such as disposal of on-site solid waste other than brush or stumps, and uses allowed by special permit, such as application of fertilizers for non-domestic or non-agricultural uses. The APD permit application is reviewed as part of the Special Permit Granting Authority Process by the Zoning Board.

Flood Hazard Areas

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) FIRM Database data published as of July 21, 2014 the flood hazard areas present in Natick are as follows:

- + A: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, no Base Flood Elevation
- + AE: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, with Base Flood Elevation
- + AE: Regulatory Floodway
- + X: 0.2% Annual Chance of Flooding

Zone A areas in Natick are located around Lake Cochituate, Fisk, and Dug Ponds. Zone AE is an area inundated by 100-year flooding for which base flood elevations (BFE) have been determined. In Natick these areas include the areas around Jennings Pond and along Mud Pond Stream south of Route 9, around Nonesuch Pond, along Beaver Dam and Davis Brooks, and along the Charles River. Zone X includes the areas between the limits of the base flood and the 0.2-percent-annual-chance (or 500-year) flood. These areas in Natick include wetlands south of Winter Street, wetlands around Pickerel Pond and along Mud Pond Stream north of Route 9, along Beaver Dam Brook, three patches of wetlands south of Route 135 just west of Fisk, Dug and Cochituate Ponds, Union Street intersection, and along the Charles River. There are also Zone X areas along a short brook near Glen Street and around a small water pool in the northernmost part of Town just north of the MassPike.



Mud Pond (Sunkaway)



Mud Pond (Sunkaway)



Vegetated buffer zone

FLOOD PLAIN OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Town of Natick Flood Plain Overlay District (FPOD), Zoning Bylaw 9.1, (<http://www.natickma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/80>) protects persons and property against the hazards of floodwater inundation. This regulation restricts construction or expansion of buildings in the FPOD, except those used for woodland, grassland, wetland, agricultural, horticultural or recreational purposes. Permissible exceptions are provided in the FPOD, including use of such land that will not interfere with the general purpose of the FPOD, and are reviewed by the Board of Appeals with input from the Planning Board, Board of Health, Board of Public Works, Board of Selectmen and Town Conservation Commission.

Wetlands

Massachusetts defines wetlands as follows (MA General Law Chapter 131, Section 40):

“The term ‘freshwater wetlands’ shall mean wet meadows, marshes, swamps, bogs, areas where groundwater, flowing or standing surface water or ice provides a significant part of the supporting substrate for a plant community for at least five months of the year; emergent and submergent plant communities in inland waters; that portion of any bank which touches any inland waters.” Various wetland types are further defined on the basis of hydrology and indicator plants and include bogs (19 types of indicator plants), swamps (22 types of plants), wet meadows (12 types of plants), and marshes (22 types of plants).”

Any activity within this 100 feet and/or within 200 feet of a river or perennial stream is subject to the discretion of the Conservation Commission, as per the Wetlands Protection Act, Rivers Protection Act (a 1996 amendment to the Wetlands Protection Act), the state regulations pertaining to these acts (310 CMR 10.00 and 310 CMR 10.58, respectively), Stormwater Management Policy and Natick’s Wetlands Protection Bylaw and Regulations.

The Wetlands Protection Bylaw, Article 79 of the Natick Bylaws, effective as of 2000, increased the restrictions placed on wetlands in Town by dividing the 100-foot jurisdictional buffer area provided by the state law into a “no-disturb” zone (first 25 feet), a “no-build” zone (first 40 feet) and the remaining 60 feet which requires permission from the Conservation Commission for any work within it. It also regulates isolated wetlands subject to flooding and vernal pools (See discussion of vernal pools in the Fisheries and Wildlife section later in this chapter). In addition, it provides for wildlife corridors.



Rain garden at Natick High School

WETLAND BYLAW

The Town of Natick Wetland Bylaw Article 79 (<http://www.natickma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/462>) protects any freshwater wetland, bank, beach, flat, marsh, swamp, wet meadow, or bog bordering on any creek, river, perennial stream, intermittent stream, pond, lake, or reservoir and any vernal pool, Riverfront Area, floodplain, isolated wetland, lands under any of the water bodies listed above, and lands subject to flooding or inundation by groundwater, surface water or storm water flow. A buffer zone of 100 ft. around any resource area (except Riverfront Area and 100-year floodplain) is subject to regulation under the Bylaw. The Bylaw establishes minimum setbacks from the Protected Resource Area referred to as "No Build Zones" and "No Disturbance Zones". Unless it meets one of the predefined exceptions, any alteration to a Protected Resource Area or the Buffer Zone must first receive and then comply with an issued permit. Permits applications are reviewed by the Natick Conservation Commission.

The Town has also adopted a stormwater management bylaw and regulations in compliance with EPA's Phase II requirements for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems. The regulations require a permit for land disturbances greater than 40,000 square feet and prohibit illicit discharges into the stormwater system.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BYLAW

The Town of Natick Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Bylaw Article 79A (<http://www.natickma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/460>) protects surface and groundwater resources from pollutants and sedimentation runoff resulting from disturbance activities. Any activity that results in land disturbance of 40,000 square feet or more shall be reviewed and permitted by the Conservation Commission (<http://www.natickma.gov/426/Conservation-Commission>). Any land disturbance less than 40,000 sf must prevent soils or other eroded matter from being deposited onto adjacent properties, rights-of-ways, public storm drainage system, or wetland or watercourse as prescribed and specified by the Bylaw.



Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary



Blue Heron on Lake Cochituate

Flora and Fauna Resources

Vegetation

Vegetation within Natick is typical of the eastern Massachusetts region. Upland areas are dominated by a mixed deciduous and coniferous tree line, while the low-lying wetlands are predominantly red maples. The undeveloped open fields in Natick have combinations of upland grasses, goldenrods, and asters with scrub shrubbery dominated by roses and brambles. Wetland communities form combinations of trees, shrub, and herbaceous layers. Some wetland areas exist as either shrub swamps or herbaceous marshes. A large portion of the Sunkaway is an Atlantic white cedar swamp, which is much less common than red maple swamps.

Public shade trees are managed by the Natick Public Works Department Land Facilities Department and Natural Resources Department under the Tree Warden. These trees line public streets and rights-of-way and landscape public grounds such as cemeteries, schools and the Town Common. According to the Town's subdivision rules and regulations, "any tree twelve (12) inches in diameter or larger shall not be removed in the construction of a new subdivision." In an effort to increase the species diversity of street tree offerings, and mitigate the effects of pest infestations like Emerald Ash Borer and diseases like Dutch Elm, it is recommended that efforts should be made to use a variety of hardy tree species when planning for any replacement or new street tree planting activities.

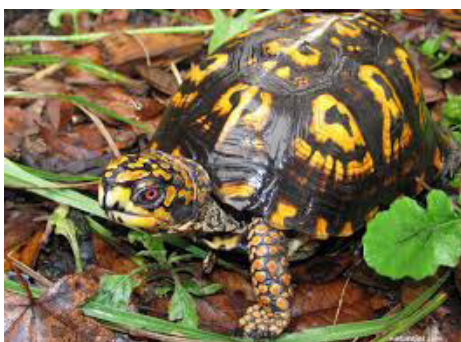
Corridors for Wildlife Migration

For most species, the best habitats are found in areas that are well watered, have abundant understory vegetation, and are relatively free of human intervention. For some game species, such as white-tail deer or beaver, the size of the contiguous range is important. An analysis of existing open space and Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape Habitat lands reveals two possible pathways to serve as corridors for wildlife migration in Natick. Probable pathways occur when several large tracts of habitats are located in close enough proximity for wildlife to travel from one area to another. One such stretch of land creates a potential North-South corridor from Lake Cochituate on the Wayland town line to South Main Street (Route 27) on the Sherborn town line (see Map 7.4). The corridor at its northern extent includes conservation open space around Lake Cochituate from the Wayland town line southward to West Central Street (Route 135). It continues with a small tract of Cochituate State Park recreational open space along West Central Street, and southward to conservation open space surrounding Fisk Pond. Next, it reaches recreational open space around and south of Dug Pond extending to South Main Street where it continues into Sherborn.

There is a potential East-West corridor for wildlife migration in South Natick along the Charles River. The Charles River, which offers a natural wildlife corridor, supports great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, and green herons, as well as a large number of more common waterfowl. The corridor begins at the intersection of the Natick, Dover and Sherborn town lines and continues northeasterly along the Charles River through a Critical Natural Landscape habitat area within Mass. Audubon's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary. It continues along the river just south of Route 16 to the Glen Street Park conservation open space. Finally, it crosses through South Natick falls and into the Hunnewell Field Playground conservation open space before crossing the Natick-Dover-Wellesley town line.



Blue-spotted salamander



Eastern Box Turtle

Existing powerline rights-of-way, such as the existing utility corridor running along the western edge of Town, provide a potential wildlife corridor. These existing cleared rights-of-way can double as habitat for wildlife if vegetation cutting is limited to longer intervals that allow shrub habitat to develop. The protective cover serves as nesting habitat for birds like Prairie Warbler, eastern Bluebird and Eastern Towhee.

Unique Environments & Rare Species

Natick has no areas designated as Massachusetts Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. However, there are important ecosystems. The BioMap2 prepared by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) shows several important areas for biodiversity based on the occurrence of rare species. The largest is the area including and near Cochituate State Park, followed by Broadmoor. There are smaller areas along the Charles River near the Wellesley town line, some areas of the Sunkaway, and an area east of South Main Street near the Sherborn town line.

Additionally, the Charles River corridor provides a habitat for the “threadfoot” plant, as well as animals including waterfowl, white-tailed deer, mink, and otter. A unique Atlantic white cedar swamp is located around Mud Pond in the Sunkaway.

The NHESP’s list of Rare and Endangered Species by town is available at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/species-information-and-conservation/town-species-viewer.html>. According to the database, the Boreal Turret Snail is the only species in Natick that is listed as endangered and was last sighted in 1977. Two species, Hentz’s Redbelly Tiger Beetle and Mustard White, are listed as Threatened and have been spotted historically. All other rare species in Natick are listed as species of Special Concern. These include the Blue-spotted salamander (last sighted in 2003), Purple Tiger Beetle (1937), Intricate Fairy Shrimp (1998), Mocha Emerald (1971), Triangle Floater (2000), Eastern Pondmussel (2006), Creeper (2000) and Eastern Box Turtle (2007).

Scenic Landscapes

Natick has a number of officially designated scenic roads: Winter and Frost Streets in the northeast corner of Town; Bacon (from Wellesley town line to Walnut Street) and Walnut Streets north of the Town Center; and many streets in the more rural southern part of town: Cottage Street, Dover Road, Everett Street, Farwell Street, Glen Street, Glenwood Street, Pegan Lane, Pleasant Street, Rockland Street, South Street, Union Street and Woodland Street.



Pegan Hill

Natick has several notable hills that offer scenic value and should be protected: Pegan Hill, Carver Hill, Broad Hill, Train Hill, Pleasant Hill, Drury Hill, and Tom Hill. The valley between the Sunkaway, Morse's Pond, Coolidge Hill, Indian Brook and the Charles River is another notable geological feature. The Charles River and especially its waterfall at the South Natick Dam offer particular scenic value.

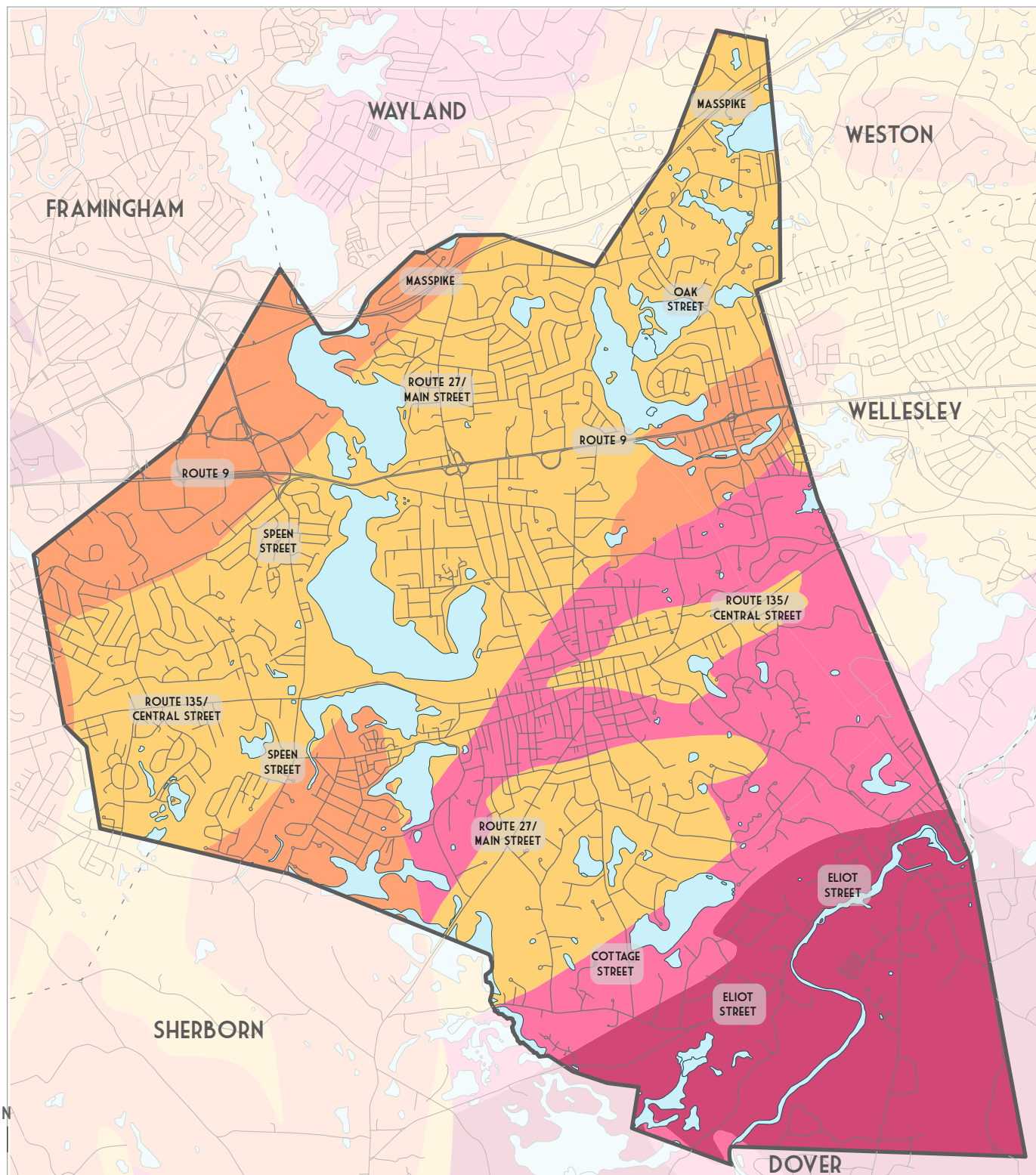
Geology

The bedrock composition and surficial geology of Natick determine the soil make up, topography and the landscape character. As shown in the bedrock and surficial geology (see Maps 7.5 and 7.7), Natick has a varied subsurface geology determined by bands of bedrock types running in a roughly diagonal pattern southwest to northeast across the Town. The entire Town is located over the Milford antiform and includes five categories of bedrock:

- + **Pelitic Rocks:** derived from mudstone (shale) protoliths and are rich in potassium (K), aluminum (Al), silicon (Si), iron (Fe), magnesium (Mg), and water (H₂O), with lesser amounts of manganese (Mn), titanium (Ti), calcium (Ca), and other constituents.
- + **Felsic Volcanics:** produced by metamorphism of both igneous and sedimentary protoliths (e.g., granite and arkose, respectively) and are rich in silicon, sodium (Na), potassium, calcium, aluminum, and lesser amounts of iron and magnesium.
- + **Mafic Rocks:** derive from basalt protoliths and some volcanogenic sediments and contain an abundance of iron, magnesium, calcium, silicon, and aluminum
- + **Avalon Granite:** Granite found within the Avalon Terrance composed of Dedham granite, a Light grayish-pink to greenish-gray granite, and the Milford granite, a grayish-pink granite

This bedrock base contributes to the surficial geology found across the Town. Four generalized categories comprise the surficial geology:

- + **Postglacial Deposits:** Sand, gravel, silt and other materials deposited after the last glacial period either by natural erosive forces (wind, water, etc.) or by man-made activities. Alluvial deposits are associated with moving water channels and floodplains, rich in minerals and nutrients and well suited to agricultural use where topography allows. Swamp and marsh deposits are associated with wetland areas, less suitable to agriculture and development but important from a flood protection standpoint. Artificial fill is non-native material transported to the site, usually for development activities. The general make-up of the fill is determined by the site of origination.
- + **Glacial Stratified Deposits:** Deposits of streams formed by the melting of glaciers. These deposits are sorted and stratified by the action of water from melting ice. While the melt water deposits the coarse material near the end of the glacier, the finer material is carried further away. Exact soil make-up is variable, and suitability for agricultural use or development is dependent on soil class and slope.
- + **Thick Till & Moraine:** Unstratified and unsorted deposits of sediment that form



LEGEND

- BEDROCK TYPE**
- Pelitic Rocks
- Felsic Volcanics
- Mafic Rocks
- Avalon Granite
- Water



MAP 7.6 BEDROCK LITHOLOGY

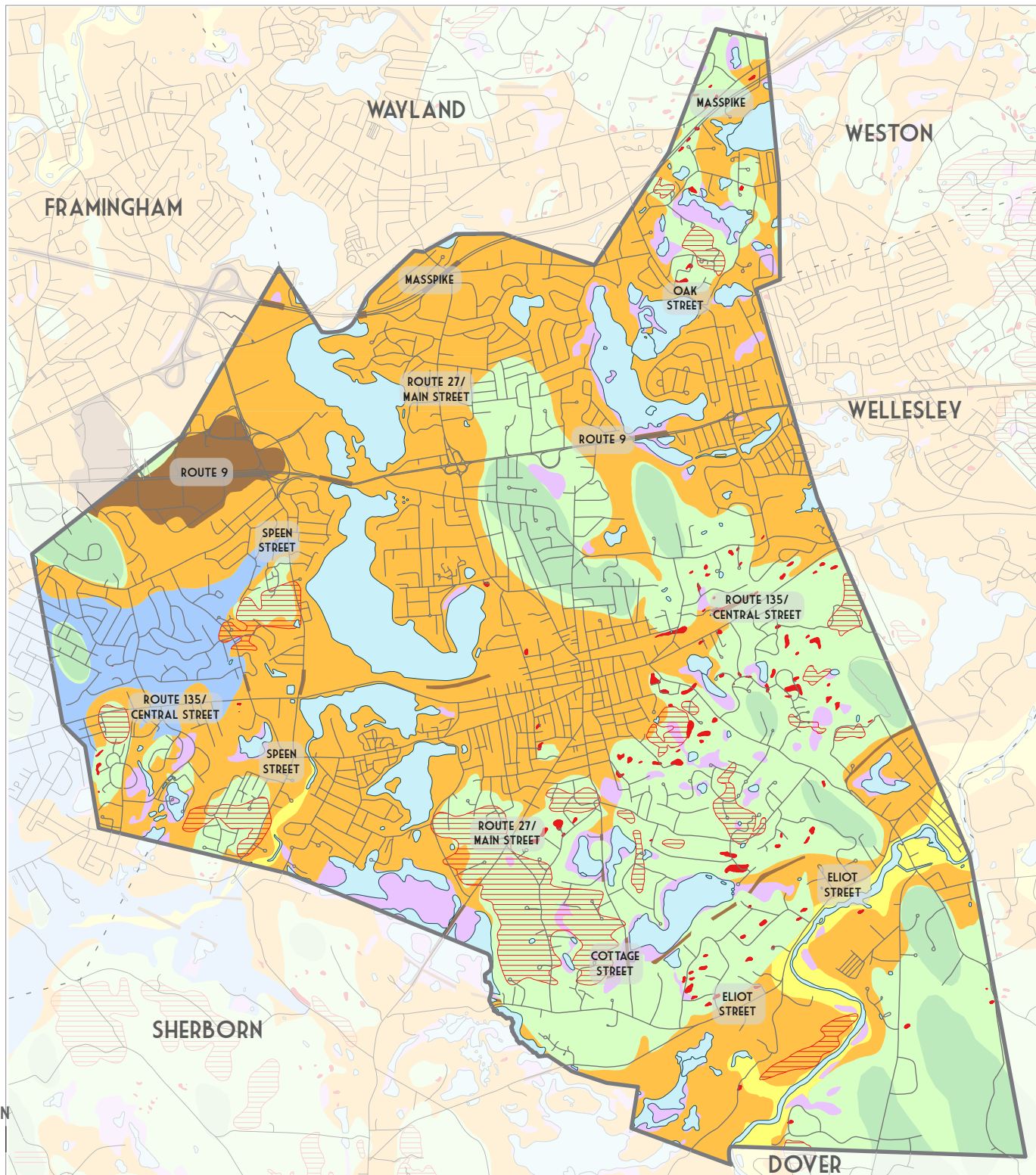
through the direct action of, or contact with, glacial ice. Till is derived from the erosion and entrainment of material by the moving ice of a glacier. Many different varieties are recognized on the basis of their position with respect to a glacier. Areas of thick till tend to be more suited towards agriculture, although this is highly dependent on existing topography.

- + **Bedrock & Thin Till:** Exposed areas of subsurface bedrock and thin deposits of unstratified glacial till. Thin till is suitable for agricultural purposes depending on depth to bedrock. These areas can be challenging for development uses and bedrock outcroppings may increase development costs.

Open Space Committees/Management

The ongoing efforts of the Town to manage and preserve the excellent open spaces it offers are led by various committees and volunteer groups. A few of the key committees are included below with descriptions of their services.

- + **Open Space Advisory Committee,** appointed by the Board of Selectmen, recommends ways the Town can protect and make best use of town open spaces and updates the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- + **Town Forest Committee,** appointed by the Conservation Commission, manages Hunnewell Town Forest and promotes public enjoyment and appreciation of this resource.
- + **Trails Maintenance Committee,** appointed by the Conservation Commission, maintains and encourages use of existing trails throughout Natick and develops new trails.
- + **Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee,** appointed by the Board of Selectmen, advises the Selectmen regarding future development of a multi-use path on the old railroad line between Natick and Saxonville.
- + **F.I.D.O. (Fun Informed Dog Owners of Natick),** an independent citizens group initiated by the Open Space Advisory Committee, is developing plans for a dog park at the entrance to the Middlesex Path on Route 135.
- + **Friends of Natick Trails,** a new nonprofit corporation, is currently being formed to raise funds and support the development of the Cochituate Rail Trail and other trails in Natick.
- + **Natick Transportation Advisory Committee** is appointed by the Board of Selectman to advise the Town on transportation projects and policies through an integrated approach that reflects all modes of transportation, including transit, cycling, pedestrian and vehicular modes of travel. The former Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee was incorporated into this committee.
- + **The Trustees of Reservations** is a statewide non-profit agency that manages Pegan Hill.



- L
E
G
E
N
D**
- POSTGLACIAL DEPOSITS**
 - Artificial Fill
 - Swamp & Marsh Deposits
 - Alluvium
 - GLACIAL STRATIFIED DEPOSITS**
 - Coarse
 - Glaciolacustrine Fine
 - THICK TILL & MORAINES**
 - Thick Till

- BEDROCK & THIN TILL**
 - Bedrock Outcrop
 - Thin Till Outcrop
 - Abundant Outcrop & Shallow Bedr
- OTHER**
 - Water



MAP 7.7 SURFACE GEOLOGY

Issues & Opportunities

The Town of Natick contains an excellent variety of open space and natural resource offerings for its residents. The Town offers great access to its water resources, a good variety of recreational amenities provided around town, well buffered and protected natural areas, and a distribution of protected open space such that 90% of the Town is within a quarter mile of an open space area. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, many identified opportunities for improvement focus on specific efforts to improve the existing resources and pursue expansion in a more focused manner. The four key areas for future efforts are as follows:

Connectivity of Open Space

- + Providing better access to the Town open spaces was identified as a prime area of focus as part of the public meeting discussions and during the existing conditions analysis. Many of the existing parks have internal trail networks and one or two access points that limit a wider availability of access to surrounding neighborhoods. Access to the Town's open space network should be improved through increased entry points, better signage and trailhead markings, handicap accessibility improvements, and stronger connectivity to under-served neighborhoods.
- + The focus of access improvements should include all modes of transportation including sidewalks, bike lanes, bike trails, walking trails, and crossing signals and markings. These improvements should be planned and constructed in coordination with general transportation improvement efforts in town.
- + Future trail networks should focus on creating linkages both between the various isolated open space parcels and to larger regional networks in and around Natick.
- + Wildlife corridors are most beneficial to species when they provide a contiguous network of well sized parcels and linear corridors. Future land acquisitions and planned conservation easements should focus on expanding connections between existing open space parcels and corridors, especially along the potential wildlife corridors identified on the Natural Resource Map.

Availability and Variety of Recreational Space

- + While there is a good variety of recreational space available in town, it is currently under stress from high levels of use. There is a need for increased recreational space and the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields recommended 10 two-acre rectangular multi-use fields, one full-size baseball field, and two tennis courts to be located in the western and northwestern regions of Town, additional play areas on the eastern side of Town Center, and at least two new lighted basketball courts located generally within the town limits.
- + Multiple public comments from residents included a desire to see a higher level of variety offered in the recreational uses, including varying athletic field types, community gardens, dog parks, public pools, a teen center, and family oriented destinations. These comments echoed the findings of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields.

- + There are two areas of town that were identified in the Master Plan for Parks and Fields as lacking recreational park resources: the northeast corner and the southernmost section. There is a limited availability of undeveloped land in the northeast corner of Natick and much of that land is unsuitable for field space due to topography or the presence of wetlands. Improvements should focus on improving existing facilities. The southern portion of Natick is more sparsely populated, but also has several large undeveloped parcels and current agricultural uses that may become available for recreational development in the future.

Maintenance and Protection of Open Space and Natural Resources

- + Residents of Natick recognize that the total available area and general state of the natural open spaces around Natick is a major asset to the Town. Future efforts and resources should focus on maintaining the good condition and the ecological health of these spaces.
- + Future expansions and acquisition of open space should be carried out with mindfulness to the capacity and budget of the Public Works Department. Small, single plot acquisitions should be limited to areas that can become part of a larger open space network, or that have the potential to fill an identified need.
- + Improvements to connectivity and access should be carried out in coordination with larger transportation projects to maximize efficient use of public funding.

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OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & NATURAL RESOURCES 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.



Drawing from an understanding of the existing conditions of Natick’s open space and recreation resources, and keeping in mind the identified issues and opportunities, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for the preservation, expansion and maintenance of open space and recreation 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. Continue to support, expand and maintain Natick’s high quality active and passive open spaces.**
- 2. Increase the number of public connections, perimeter trails and access points to Natick’s lakes, rivers and wetlands.**
- 3. Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect Natick’s open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the Town.**
- 4. Preserve and protect Natick’s water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.**
- 5. Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town’s open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities through installation of wayfinding and trailheads, provision of updated trail maps, and community engagement efforts.**

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.



Scenic overlook at Lake Cochituate

GOAL 1

Continue to support, expand and maintain Natick's high quality active and passive open spaces.

R1.1

LEAD



OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
PLANNING BOARD

SUPPORT



ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE
OFFICER



ON-GOING



PURSUE STRATEGIES THAT IDENTIFY AND PROTECT MULTI-BENEFIT OPEN SPACES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN BOTH A HIGH-QUALITY AND HIGH-FUNCTIONING OPEN SPACE NETWORK WITHIN THE TOWN OF NATICK.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Town of Natick contains a high percentage of open space within its borders and offers a well-balanced distribution of that open space. As development continues, opportunities for large acquisitions of open space will dwindle. The decision to accept additional land to be kept and maintained as open space should be done thoughtfully, avoiding a piecemeal and disjointed approach to acquisition.

The Town should make a concerted effort to prioritize protection of open space based on identified characteristics, with higher priority given to parcels that provide a variety of benefits. Priority characteristics for the Town to consider when expanding the open space network should include:

- + Areas that enhance existing open spaces by creating larger contiguous parcels or connecting existing open space, neighborhoods, trails, or wildlife corridors (See Maps 7.9, 7.10, 7.11).
- + Areas serving as flood hazard buffer zones, surface water buffer zones, and aquifer or wellhead protection zones (See Map 7.12).
- + Priority wildlife corridors, habitats, and environmentally sensitive areas (See Map 7.11).
- + Farm land, fallow land, and other open space that may be made available for farming use by license, lease or deed restriction.
- + Open space in areas of the town currently deficient in open space and recreational facilities (See Maps 7.8 and 7.9).
- + Areas of historic significance.



4-7 YEARS



One way to help focus these priorities is to create a weighted model in a GIS program that specifically emphasizes parcels that meet these criteria. The Mass Audubon MAPPR Tool 2.0 (<https://www.massaudubon.org/our-conservation-work/advocacy/shaping-the-future-of-your-community/current-projects/mappr-project/mappr-tool>) is an example of this type of analysis. The Planning Board and Conservation Commission should work with the GIS Department to utilize the available data, both collected by the Town and as part of this Comprehensive Plan process, to start highlighting these critical areas.

This ambitious recommendation would require detailed analysis, probably conducted by a consultant. The benefit of such an analysis is that it would provide the Town with a systematic analysis that could be used to identify priority open space parcels.



With these priorities in mind, the Town of Natick should continue to pursue protection of privately held open space through acquisition, conservation restrictions, and easements in order to meet the open space needs of the Town as they evolve over time.

Additionally, twenty-seven percent of the current distribution of open space falls under a limited-protection program, which does not ensure permanent status as open space for the Town. The Town should assess these limited-protection parcels if/when their use is proposed to change and assess their value as a permanently protected parcel utilizing the criteria on page 7.38. Mechanisms for ensuring permanent protection include:

- + Acquiring key open space parcels using the FAR Bonus Stabilization Fund.
- + Securing open space easements and deed-restricted POPS (privately owned public space) as part of the permitting review process.
- + Actively encouraging landowners to put land under conservation restrictions.
- + Reviewing the appropriateness of utility easements, “paper” streets, and aqueducts for expanding linear open space connections.
- + Preserving open space held by the Town that is not already protected as open space (such as school athletic fields) through permanent easement or acquisition.
- + Ensuring that new zoning bylaws encourage the setting aside of open space, trail easements, FAR Bonus Stabilization Fund payments, etc.



Finally, the Town should require submission of a digital conservation easement boundary plan as part of the permitting process for any new development.

The Town currently keeps a digital database of all properties carrying a conservation easement, however the exact extent of the easements is not always consistently recorded, and any easement obtained as part of the Town’s permitting process is only recorded in hard copy with the deed of the property. Future open space planning efforts would benefit from a digital GIS database that records the full extent of all conservation easements. This would allow for a more consistent tabulation of total area protected and a more coordinated effort to create connections between existing dedicated open space.

R1.2

ACTIVELY EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND & ENHANCE THE TOWN’S ACTIVE RECREATION FIELDS AND FACILITIES.



Based on the existing conditions analysis and public input process for this Plan, it was found that the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields recommendations are consistent with the current needs of the Town. **The recommendations of that plan should be prioritized and incorporated into future improvement budgets, with an emphasis on expanding the offerings of rectangular multi-use fields (e.g. fields that can be used for soccer, lacrosse, football, etc.) throughout the town.** Natick’s growing youth and aging populations are placing greater demands on programs and facilities. The fields in Natick are currently used at a rate of more than 150% of their realistic use annually. Following the recommendations of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields, the Town needs, at a minimum, 10 two-acre rectangular multi-use fields, one full-size baseball field, two

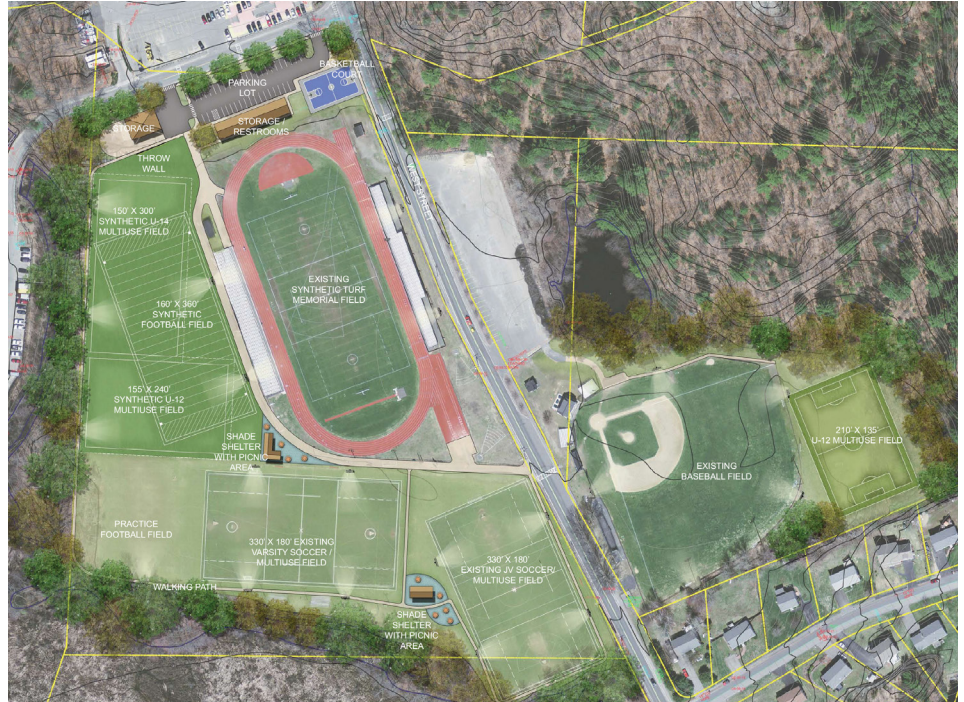
LEAD

RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Proposed Plan for Natick High School South Complex from the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields



tennis courts on the north and west sides of town, at least two lighted basketball courts, and additional play areas in the downtown area.

In addition to expanding the number of fields, there are options the Town can pursue to help extend the use of existing facilities. These options include:

 **1-5 YEARS** 

 **4-7 YEARS** 

 **7-12+ YEARS** 

- + **Evaluate the contribution of fees to maintenance and consider increasing fees assessed to local sports leagues for use of the Town’s playing fields.** Since heavy field use increases maintenance costs, the Town should evaluate whether it is appropriate to fund these higher costs by assessing a higher fee per person to these sports leagues. The downside is that this approach may make the leagues too expensive for some participants.
- + **Add lighting to recreational facilities in order to extend the hours of use where appropriate.** The Recreation Department can provide greater opportunities for field use by installing lights where practical. Lights should be installed in areas that will have low-to-moderate impacts on surrounding properties.
- + **Explore the pros and cons of installing artificial turf athletic fields at appropriate locations.** Artificial turf fields are more expensive to install but less expensive to maintain and can be used almost continually, unlike natural fields that need to be rested.



ADD TWO FACILITIES PER YEAR OR MAKE IMPROVEMENTS ANNUALLY TO ALLOW FOR HEAVIER USE OF FIELDS UNTIL FIELD USAGE IS AT OR BELOW INDUSTRY RECOMMENDED USE LEVELS.

R1.3

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

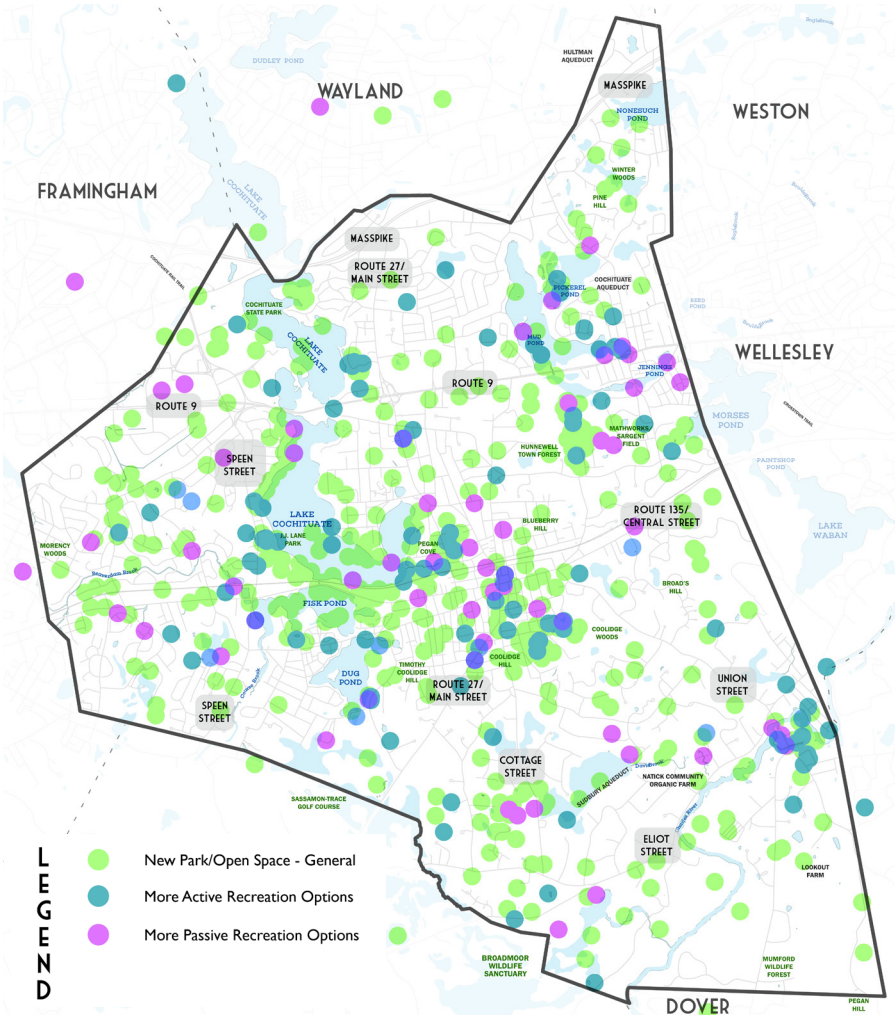
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

 **ON-GOING** 

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCORPORATE A GREATER VARIETY OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL OFFERINGS THROUGHOUT TOWN.

Throughout the Natick 2030+ public process, there were a number of recurring requests for expanded offerings, including community gardens, splash pads, a community pool, a dog park, and pocket parks located in and around the Town Center. The Open Space Survey Response Map depicts the general categories and locations of the responses collected through the online survey.

The need for pocket parks around Town Center was commonly brought up during the public process. While small, noncontiguous open space plots can be challenging from a maintenance and upkeep perspective, when located in densely populated areas they help provide needed respite. **Pocket parks should be considered as an option in the Town Center area during review of development proposals and when tax delinquent or parcels that are unusable for other purposes are available for acquisition.**



MAP 7.8 OPEN SPACE SURVEY RESPONSE MAP

1-5 YEARS 

Also as part of the public input portion of the Natick 2030+ process, there were numerous requests for locating a dog park in town. Final plans for the selected site on West Central Street have been approved the Stanton Foundation, the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board. **The Town should continue to work with FIDO to install a dog park.**



1-5 YEARS 

Several of the requested facilities were addressed as recommendations by the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields (Table 7.2) and should be strongly considered for incorporation in future projects. These recommendations include installation or expansion of community gardens at several locations around Town and identified locations for splash pads at two Town parks.

If the demand exists for additional community garden space, the Town could potentially consider another location south of Route 9. However, as this area of Town generally has larger parcels and more access to personal garden space, the need may not be as great. The proposed locations for splash pads would provide access to water recreation on both the east and west sides of Town.



7-12+ YEARS 

Another common request by residents included access to a community pool. **While a community pool may not be feasible for the Town at this time, it may be possible to partner with adjacent towns to help provide this amenity. Specifically, the Town of Wellesley includes plans to develop an indoor aquatic center as part of its Comprehensive Plan, and an opportunity may present itself to develop a partnership to expand access to this amenity to Natick residents.**

The recommendation is ambitious because it is entirely dependent upon the cooperation of the Town of Wellesley. It would, however, result in providing Natick residents with access to a swimming pool without burdening the Town with having to construct, operate and maintain a swimming facility.


COMMUNITY GARDEN	SPLASH PAD
East School	Henry Wilson Park
Lilja Elementary School	Murphy Field
Community Senior Center	
Bennett-Hemenway School	


TABLE 7.2 2016 MASTER PLAN FOR PARKS AND FIELDS PROPOSED LOCATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL AMENITIES



2016 Master Plan Proposed Plan for Henry Wilson Park improvements & splash pad (left) and Murphy Field improvements & splash pad (right).

R1.4

LEAD 
 BOARD OF SELECTMEN
 RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 
 PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

ENSURE THAT THE MAINTENANCE BUDGETS AND REVENUE STREAMS FOR OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ARE COMMENSURATE WITH EXPANSION OF OPEN SPACE AREA AND AMENITY OFFERINGS.

The Master Plan for Parks and Fields found a budget shortfall in its assessment of yearly budgets for athletic field maintenance within the Town. Similarly, the Conservation Commission does not have a continual revenue source for maintaining the parcels under their ownership for conservation. Based on an analysis of comparison communities in the Boston region completed for this Plan (Table 7.3), Natick’s current per capita spending on open space is toward the lower end of the spectrum for communities with comparative populations and median household income. Natick residents were fairly evenly split on their response to the question of whether potential budget increases should be spent on expanding open space or improving maintenance of existing open space and recreational amenities.

	PER CAPITA SPENDING	POPULATION	MEDIAN HH INCOME
Lexington (fy2018)	\$62	32,936	\$152,872
Wellesley (fy 2018)	\$59	28,909	\$171,719
Framingham (fy 2017)	\$51	70,743	\$70,706
Melrose (fy 2018)	\$51	27,787	\$87,712
Milton (fy 2018)	\$49	27,351	\$122,516
Natick (fy 2018)	\$44	35,385	\$104,372
Arlington (fy 2017)	\$39	44,408	\$98,103

TABLE 7.3 ANNUAL OPEN SPACE SPENDING FOR COMPARISON COMMUNITIES



ONGOING

It is recommended that the Parks and Open Space budget be revisited regularly upon acquisition of future parcels and expansion of facilities. For active recreation facilities, future maintenance budgets should be adjusted in accordance with industry standards for materials and labor necessary to adequately maintain such facilities. For passive recreation and conservation parcels, dedicated budgets should be provided for trails maintenance, wayfinding, upkeep, invasive species management and ecological health and habitat management. The roles of the Recreation and Parks Department staff and Public Works Department staff should be clearly defined in terms of responsibilities for each of these maintenance activities and dedicated line items should be included within their budgets.



ONGOING

Additionally, the Town should continue to seek other supporting revenue streams and/or maintenance options for its open space and recreational facilities, including developer payments to the FAR Stabilization Fund, maintenance agreements with private owners for POPS (privately owned and maintained public spaces) and federal, state, and private grants like the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation and the Massachusetts LAND and PARC programs.



METRIC

OPEN SPACE BUDGETS DEMONSTRATE PER CAPITA SPENDING LEVELS COMMENSURATE WITH COMPARISON COMMUNITIES, REVIEWED ON A THREE YEAR BASIS

GOAL 2

Increase the number of public connections, perimeter trails and access points to Natick's lakes, rivers and wetlands.

R2.1

WORK WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION (DCR) TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ACCESS POINTS AROUND LAKE COCHITUATE.

LEAD 

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
MA DEPT. OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

SUPPORT 

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Residents voiced strong support for increasing access to the surface water resources with particular interest in Lake Cochituate. While the topography and some of the adjacent private land holdings make it difficult to provide a fully-encircling perimeter path, there are opportunities for additional access points around the Lake.

Continue working with DCR to incorporate a gated connection from the Cochituate Rail Trail to the Cochituate State Park main area. This will provide direct access to the northern segment of the lake during most times of the year. It is important to note that the DCR does limit the total number of visitors to the northern segment of the park during peak summer use in order to maintain responsible capacity levels for park use. The capacity level is maintained through closures to additional visitors once the parking lots are full. DCR extends this policy to walk-in visitors as well; all entrances to the State Park must have the ability to be gate controlled during peak summer days.



1-5 YEARS

1-5 YEARS 

While the topography along Lake Cochituate bordering J.J. Lane Park is too steep to provide a shoreline path, it is possible to install areas for seating and overlooks with direct access from the park. Installation of a footpath connection from J.J. Lane Park to these seating areas would allow for more direct enjoyment of the lake views from an existing adjacent park.

4-7 YEARS 

The Town also should explore opportunities to provide a second connection from the Cochituate Rail Trail directly to the lake. A potential location exists just south of Route 9 where the property widens enough to provide a lookout point or small picnic area adjacent to the Cochituate Rail Trail. Users of the trail will also have access to the Pegan Cove area by way of an at-grade bike trail crossing at Lake Street.

4-7 YEARS 

Additionally, the Master Plan for Parks and Fields recommended a number of trail and amenity upgrades to the Mary Bunker Park and Pegan Cove/Tony Anniballi Memorial Park area. **Accessible kayak launches should also be considered as part of the improvements for these area to help expand boating access for residents of Natick.** Capacity could be controlled through parking access, similar to the process used by the State Park. The Town should work with the DCR and the State Access Board to explore installation of accessible kayak launches in these locations.

ON-GOING 

Finally, the Town should continue to monitor the status of the National Guard site for opportunities to expand open space access around the lake. The National Guard site lies on the shores of Lake Cochituate and could provide a much-needed addition to recreational use of Lake Cochituate. The Cochituate State Park Management Plan urges that, should this property become surplus, the state should make every effort to add it to Cochituate State Park. Should this happen, the Town should work with DCR to expand the Town’s recreational access to the Lake.



Proposed Plan for Mary Bunker Park from the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields

R2.2

LEAD



OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT



1-5 YEARS



4-7 YEARS



EXPAND PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE CHARLES RIVER.

The Town can help increase access to the Charles River by both identifying it more formally as a “Blueway” within the Town, and by increasing direct access to the river itself.

Designating the Charles River as a “Blueway” could be accomplished through two primary mechanisms. A more symbolic approach would be to use this designation as a way of branding and highlighting the Charles River as a recreational and environmental asset to the Town. The “Blueway” designation would be publicized on the Town website and on other tourism sites for visitors to the area. Signage and branding could be developed to help recognize the waterway as a recreational corridor similar to other land-based greenways in the area. This approach would help bring attention to the corridor as a valued Town asset, while limiting the amount of regulatory oversight needed for the process.

A regulatory approach to this designation would include additional protections for water quality, standards for regular public access along the Charles River, and ongoing efforts to make all bordering areas to the Charles River open and available to the general public. This approach would require updates to the Town bylaws and development of a review and oversight structure.

Provide kayak launches along the Charles River. To help increase physical access to the Charles River, the Master Plan for Parks and Fields illustrates three potential locations for kayak launches along the Charles River. These locations provide access both above and below the South Natick Dam, and coupled with additional park improvements, would provide easy boating access on the River offered in close proximity to new parking lots.



Proposed Plan for Charles River Kayak Launch Locations from the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields

GOAL 3

Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect Natick’s open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the Town.



R3.1

LEAD



RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TRAILS COMMITTEE



ONGOING



IMPROVE THE CONNECTIVITY OF THE TOWN’S OPEN AND RECREATIONAL SPACES THROUGH BOTH (1) BETTER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TRAIL SYSTEMS AND PARKS AND (2) COORDINATED IMPROVEMENTS TO BIKE/PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

While nearly ninety percent of the land area of Natick is within one quarter mile of a public open space, less than half of the Town is within a quarter mile of a formal entrance or access point. **Future parcel and easement acquisitions should focus on improving connectivity of the Town’s existing open space when considering new open space opportunities.** Additionally, access to the open and recreation spaces around Town can be improved through both on-street bike/pedestrian infrastructure improvements and off-street trail connections. Map 7.9 illustrates the current condition of open space entrances and connecting roadway networks. Map 7.10 illustrates how expansion of open space and recreation entrances in combination with on and off-street networks could expand direct access to open space to include the entire land area of Natick within a ¼ mile buffer of the access network.

The methodology for developing these proposed improvements focused on a number of priorities:

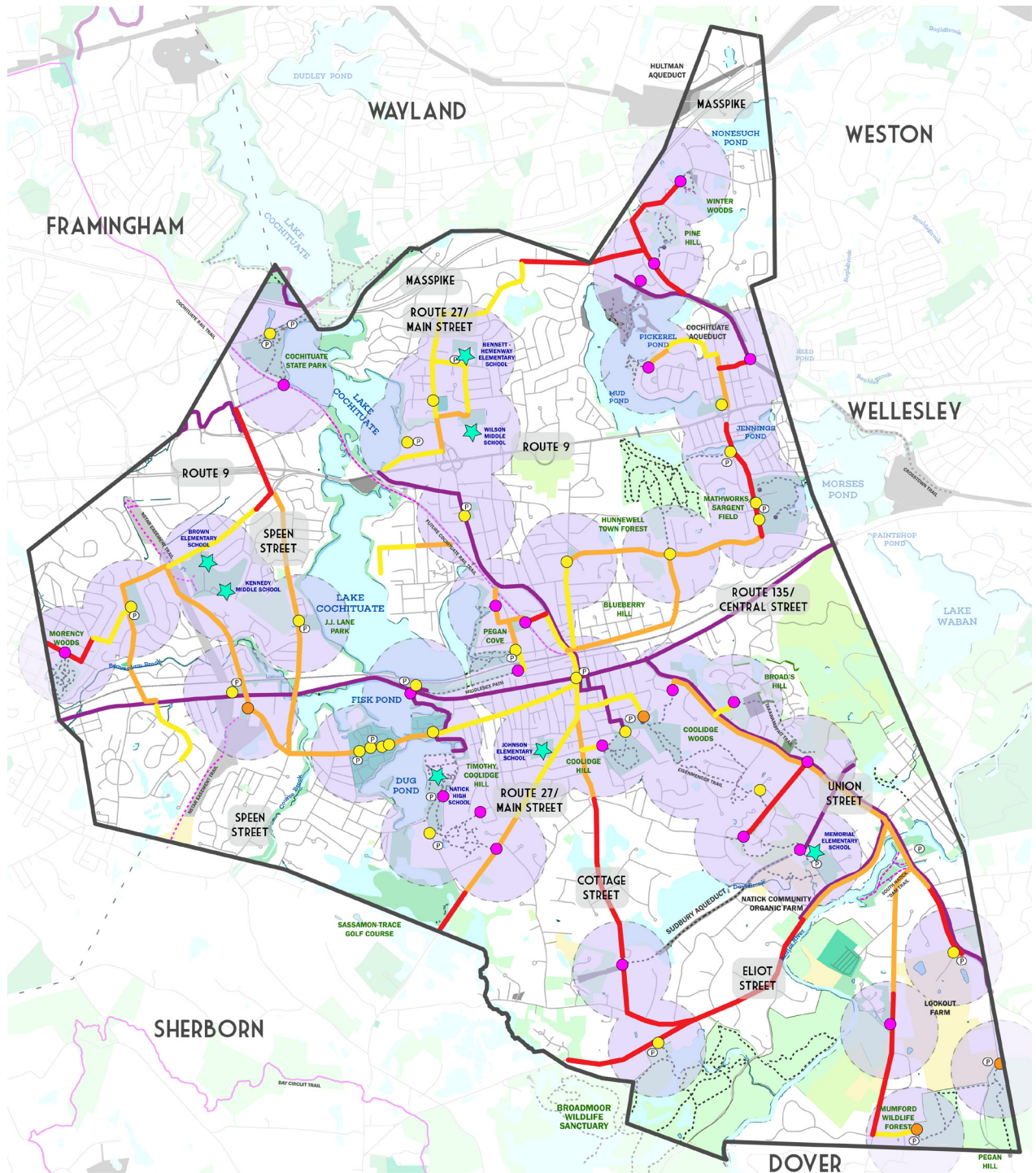
1. Connecting existing open space and recreation as much as possible to take full advantage of existing resources.
2. Creating connective loops throughout the Town that utilize a diverse system of networks including existing and future on-street sidewalks and bike lanes and off-street trail networks.
3. Expanding the number of well-marked entrances to all open spaces, parks, and trails. The locations shown on Map 7.10 include recommended locations submitted by Town residents as part of the online map survey completed during the public input phase of this process.
4. Utilizing existing protected lands and conservation/utility easements as much as possible for future locations of trail connections. These connections are intentionally displayed as generalized routes to suggest appropriate locations, but not specific trail routes. Detailed trail routes should be formalized as part of future acquisition and design projects.

As displayed in Map 7.10, the final result is a system of inner and outer loops that provides direct access to the Town’s existing open space network for nearly one hundred percent of the residents living within the Town of Natick. **The Town should work to improve and expand the open space access points shown on Figure 7.10. On-street improvements to the overall open space connectivity should be incorporated into town infrastructure improvements; bike and pedestrian improvements should be included as roadway improvement projects are completed along the routes shown.**



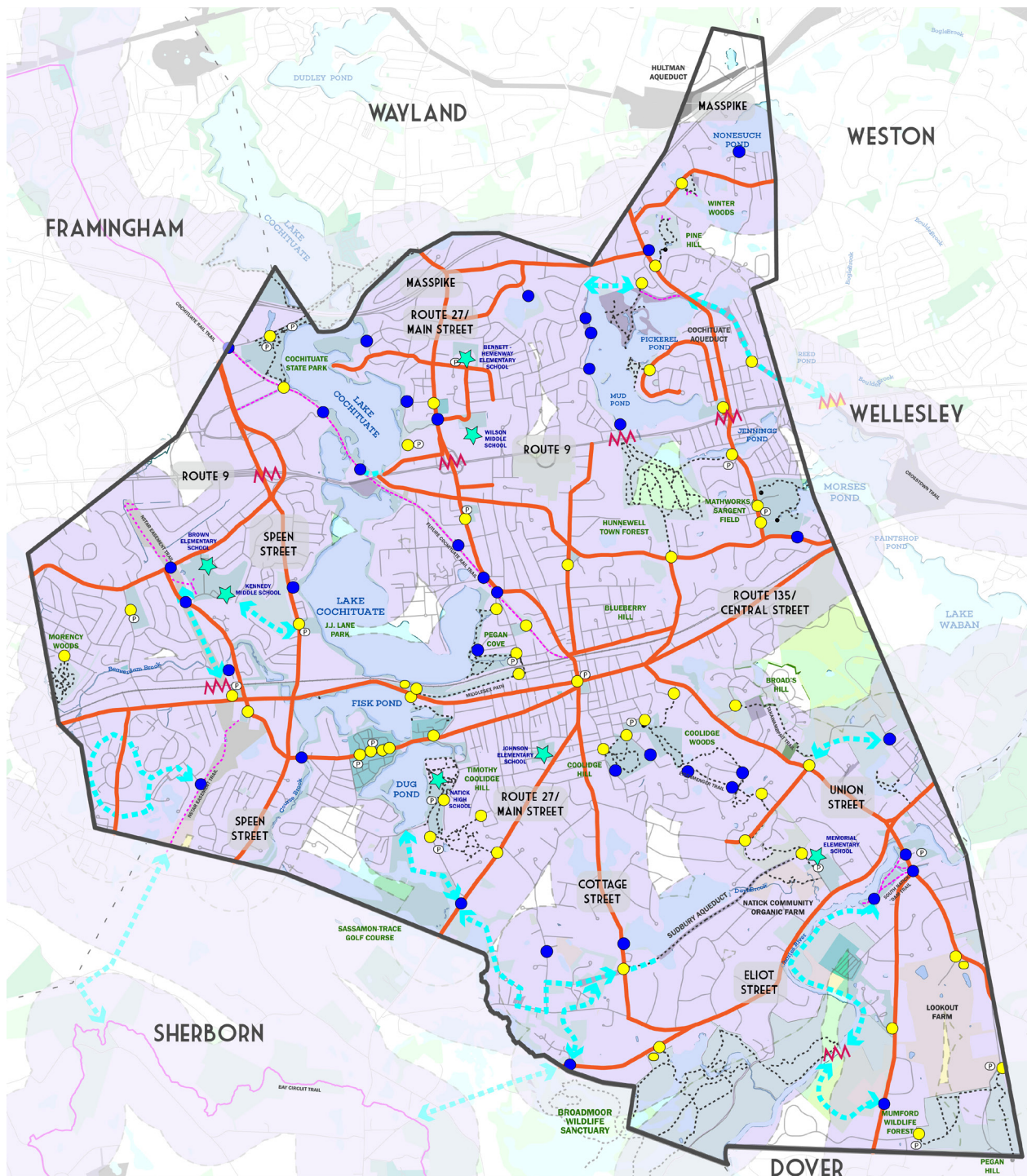
ONGOING





MAP 7.9 EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND CONNECTIONS NETWORK

- LEGEND**
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--|
| EXISTING FEATURES | TRAILS | BIKE/PED INFRASTRUCTURE (PRIORITY ROUTES) |
| OPEN SPACE TYPE | --- Main Trail | --- Existing Sidewalk Both Sides |
| Recreation | --- Informal Trail | --- Existing Sidewalk One Side |
| Conservation | ● Well Marked Entrance | --- No Existing Sidewalk |
| Historical/Cultural | ● Marked Entrance | --- Existing Bike Lane |
| Agriculture | ● Unmarked Entrance | |
| Utility | | |
| Water | | |
| P Parking | | |
| ★ School | | |
| | | ● 1/4 mile access buffer |



- EXISTING FEATURES**
- OPEN SPACE TYPE**
- Recreation
 - Conservation
 - Historical/Cultural
 - Agriculture
 - Utility
 - Water
 - P Parking
 - ★ School
- TRAILS**
- Main Trail
 - - - Informal Trail
 - Existing Entrance

- PROPOSED FEATURES**
- Priority Bike/Ped Route
 - - - Future Trail Link
 - Proposed Entrance
 - - - Protected or Elevated Bike/Ped Crossing
 - 1/4 mile access buffer

MAP 7.10 PROPOSED FUTURE OPEN SPACE AND CONNECTIONS NETWORK

LEGEND



INCREASE TRAIL CONNECTIVITY AND PARK ENTRANCES INCREMENTALLY TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED ACCESS COVERAGE. REVIEW EVERY TWO YEARS.

R3.2

RE-INSTATE THE TRAILS COMMITTEE AND COMBINE OVERLAPPING COMMITTEES

LEAD

TRAILS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

During discussions with residents and Town representatives, the status of the Trails Committee was unclear; the Committee appeared to be relatively inactive currently. **In order to better pursue the proposed expansion plans, it is recommended that the Trails Committee be formally reinstated with a clear chair and co-chair identified. Also, it may be advisable to create a single Trails Oversight Committee from the existing committees that cover projects related to the trails, including the Trails Maintenance Committee, Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee and the Friends of Natick Trails.**

1-5 YEARS

GOAL 4

Preserve and protect Natick’s water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.

R4.1

PRIORITIZE PROTECTION FOR PARCELS THAT SERVE AS WILDLIFE HABITAT, WILDLIFE CORRIDORS, OR WATER QUALITY PROTECTION.

LEAD

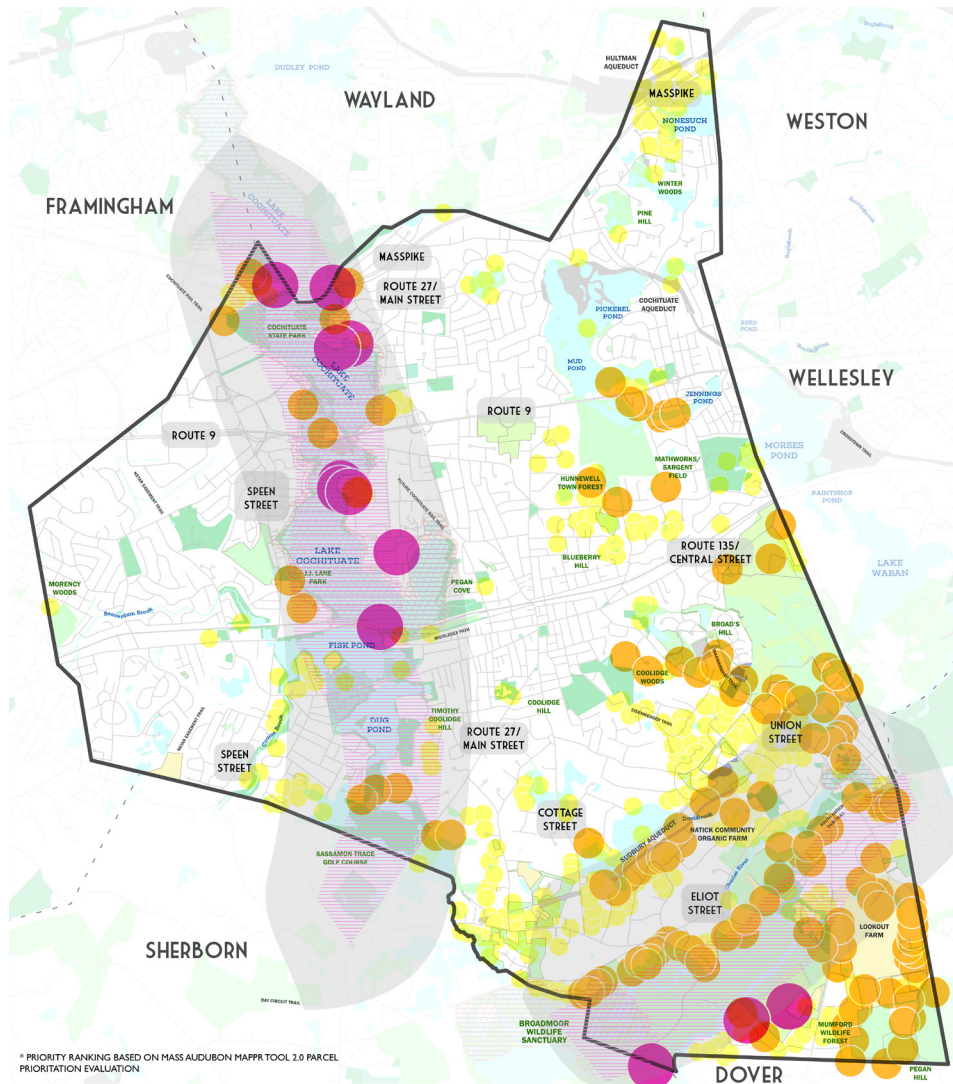
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
PLANNING BOARD

SUPPORT

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE OFFICER

The diagrams on the following pages illustrate the priority zones mentioned above. Map 7.11 illustrates priority wildlife protection corridors as identified through the Mass Audubon and The Nature Conservancy MAPPR (Mapping and Prioritizing Parcels for Resilience) Program. The diagram depicts the general locations for the highest ranked parcels (3-9) as determined by the MAPPR online tool and highlights corridors with a high density of high priority parcels. The parcels have been prioritized under the MAPPR Balanced Model, which combines weighted values for criteria covering attributes for resilience, critical linkages, core habitats, critical natural landscapes, parcel size, block size, adjacency to existing protection, and under-represented ecological settings. Taken as a whole, the map helps identify regions of the Town that are of particular importance with regard to protecting wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

Map 7.12 illustrates existing protection zones for floodplain buffers, surface water buffers, aquifers and zone II wellheads. These areas are already protected by various local, state and federal regulations. Taken as a whole, the areas shown on the map are also high priority areas for implementation of stormwater low-impact development strategies and green infrastructure projects.

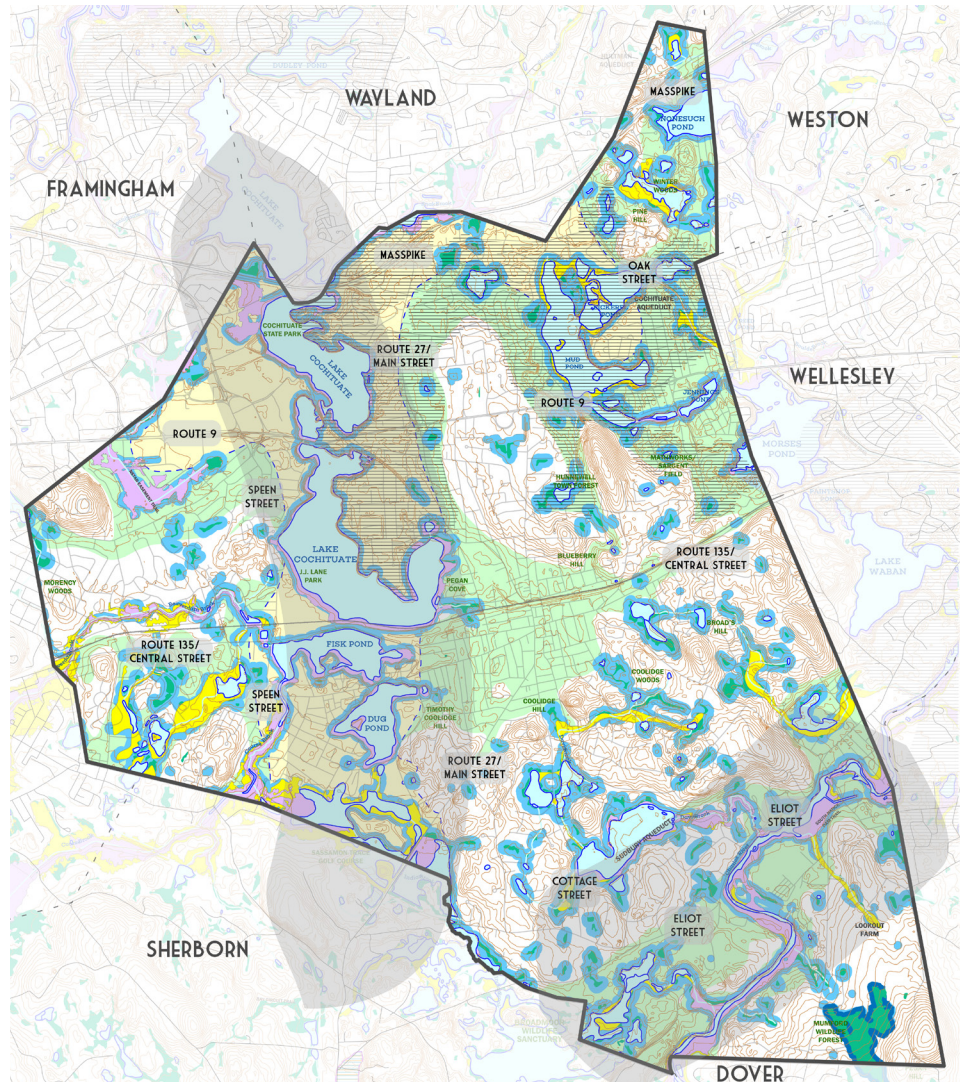


MAP 7.11 PRIORITY WILDLIFE CORRIDOR PROTECTION

- L
E
G
E
N
D**
- High Priority Parcel*
 - Mid Priority Parcel*
 - Baseline Priority Parcel*
 - High Priority Wildlife Corridor - >.5 mi width
 - Multi-Priority Open Space Corridor

Further discussion of priority open space network parcels and recreational parcels are discussed in recommendations 1.1 & 3.1. **The gray corridors depicted on Maps 7.11 & 7.12 help identify zones that would produce multiple benefits for the open space network as a whole and should be utilized for ranking open space importance when the Town is considering future open space parcel acquisitions (should land become available) or making conservation recommendations as part of the review process for development proposals.**





MAP 7.12 PRIORITY WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION

- LEGEND**
- Surface Water
 - Wetland
 - 100' Buffer Zone
 - 100 Year Floodplain
 - 500 Year Floodplain
 - Aquifer
 - Aquifer Recharge Zone
 - Zone II Wellhead Protection Areas
 - Elevation Contour (3m interval)
 - Multi-Priority Open Space Corridor

R4.2

1-5 YEARS

UPDATE THE AQUIFER PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT BYLAW

The Town should update the Aquifer Protection Overlay District Bylaw. The Community and Economic Development Department is currently heading up this effort and a draft of the update is being reviewed. The update will need to be approved by Town Meeting. The proposed revisions modernize definitions, terms, requirements, and thresholds.

 **4-7 YEARS**  **R4.3**

LEAD 
 CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SUPPORT 
 MA DEPT. OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION
 MA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

IMPLEMENT APPROPRIATE TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS (TMDL) FOR LAKE COCHITUATE

As mentioned in Existing Conditions, Lake Cochituate is listed as an impaired water body but does not have a TMDL in place. A TMDL is a regulatory term in the U.S. Clean Water Act describing a plan for restoring impaired waters that identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. The Conservation Commission is currently working with the DCR to establish a better picture of appropriate TMDLs for Lake Cochituate. **A final TMDL report for the lake should be compiled and corrective action should be taken to move this water body off the list of impaired waters.**

R4.4

LEAD 
 PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 
 SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

IMPLEMENT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ON TOWN PROPERTY.

The Town should implement pilot projects for green infrastructure, low-impact design and increased biodiversity on Town properties within the priority natural resource protection zones. Teaching by example can go a long way towards encouraging residents and property owners to begin implementing strategies that protect natural resources on their own property. The Town should actively seek to incorporate green infrastructure strategies such as disconnecting roof leaders from storm drains, installing rain barrels, incorporating bioswales or installing green roofs in areas that have been identified as water resource protection priority zones. Similarly, incorporation of more natural landscapes like no-mow lawns, meadows, pollinator gardens and successional growth areas will help connect otherwise isolated open space parcels as part of a larger wildlife corridor network. *The Conservation Commission is currently working in conjunction with the Public Works Department to implement several stormwater BMP (Best Management Practices) projects on Town-owned land. The designs are in place but construction funding has not yet been allocated.*

 **4-7 YEARS** 

R4.5

LEAD 
 SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
 BUILDING DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 
 PLANNING BOARD
 CONSERVATION COMMISSION

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE PROTECTION OF THE PRIORITY NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION AREAS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THROUGH LEGAL AND/OR ZONING MEASURES.

The Town should develop and provide informational pamphlets and lists of recommended green infrastructure strategies, native/natural landscaping strategies, and organic maintenance practices to all projects seeking a permit within the priority zones shown on Maps 7.11 and 7.12. The Town has the opportunity to provide informational resources on many of the strategies it is trying to encourage at the time of permitting. The Flood Plain Overlay District, the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, the Wetland Bylaw and the Stormwater Management Bylaw all provide opportunities to provide best practice information and encourage construction practices that achieve a higher standard of natural resource protection. Any and all construction of building or structures within these zones that requires a town permit should receive this information.

 **1-5 YEARS** 



1-5 YEARS



The Town could also encourage protection of the priority natural resource protection zones by providing property owners with information regarding Massachusetts General Law Chapter 61A: Assessment and Taxation of Agricultural and Horticultural Land, which allows a reduced tax rate for properties being used for agricultural and horticultural purposes and Chapter 61B which allows a reduced tax rate for properties being used for recreational purposes. Creating a Conservation Zoning District could also be explored.

R4.6

EXTEND THE FLOOD PLAIN OVERLAY DISTRICT PROTECTIONS IN ORDER TO ACCOUNT FOR FUTURE CLIMATIC CHANGES AND RESULTING INCREASED IMPACT ZONES.

LEAD



NATICK GIS DEPARTMENT
TOWN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
PLANNING BOARD

SUPPORT



CONSERVATION COMMISSION
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
FEMA REGIONAL OFFICE

The precise climatic conditions Natick will see in the future is unknown, but predictions for the Northeast include more precipitation events and more intense storms as the climate changes. **In order to track the effect of these changes over time, the Town could provide a crowd-sourced website for flood reporting in order to better document the areas of Town that will need increased flood protection in the coming decades.** While FEMA Flood Maps provide a baseline for flood protection policies and regulation, on-the-ground data and tracking can be more useful for understanding Town and neighborhood-level hazard areas. A crowd-sourced website that allows residents and land owners to report flood prone areas and damage would help the Town track how the flood boundary changes over time. This type of website could help inform where future extensions of the flood plain overlay district are needed for flood protection.



1-5 YEARS



This recommendation is ambitious because it would involve the cooperation of numerous residents and would require someone to consolidate and verify the information submitted. The resulting benefit would be the Town's access to more up to date, locally nuanced information than the Town receives from the state.



4-7 YEARS



Another option in the future may be to extend the review of the Flood Plain Overlay District to include review requirements for the FEMA 500-year flood plain areas. Two potential options for how the Town can approach extending this review include:

1. Amending the Flood Plain Overlay District requirements to require all new construction of buildings and structures within the 500-year flood plain area to submit a flood resiliency checklist, documenting the flood protection methods that have been utilized in the design of the project. Potential options may include elevated floor plates, deployable flood-proofing, floodable ground floor, unoccupied first floor, or elevated mechanicals and utilities. **This checklist would be for review purposes only as a way of encouraging developers to consider these types of flood-proofing options within this zone.**
2. Amending the Flood Plain Overlay District to require all new construction of buildings and structures within the 500-year Flood Plain Area be elevated to the 500-year flood elevation and be designed and constructed to resist the effects of flood hazards and flood loads for the 500-year design storm. This is the more

restrictive option and should only be pursued in consultation with the Regional Federal Emergency Management Agency, structural engineers licensed in the state of Massachusetts and familiar with FEMA flood plain models, and appropriate legal counsel.

This second option is ambitious because it would require coordination with FEMA and legal counsel regarding the ability to extend the boundaries and requirements for construction within the Flood Plain Overlay District. The benefit would be the resulting enhanced flood protection.

R4.7

INCLUDE ALL WATER RESOURCE JURISDICTIONAL LAYERS ON THE NATICK GIS MAP WEBSITE AND USE LAYER NAMING CONSISTENT WITH THE TOWN BYLAWS.

LEAD 

NATICK GIS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

PLANNING BOARD

 **1-5 YEARS** 

The Town should add the boundary layers for the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, Flood Plain Overlay District, and Wetlands Buffer Zone to the online Town GIS Map Website. Residents are increasingly expecting clear and readily accessible information from their Town governments. Providing online mapping resources is an excellent step towards clarifying jurisdictional boundaries for permitting in an easily accessible format. All jurisdictional boundaries that are defined in Town Bylaws should be readily accessed online, including those that specifically affect open space and environmental protection. The above listed boundaries should be included on the Town GIS Map to help citizens better understand the permitting requirements of their location.

It should be noted that not all of these boundaries are fixed and may need to be updated from time to time. Additionally, for layers like the Wetlands Buffer Zone, there may be unmapped wetlands in Town that are not captured in the online GIS map. These data gaps should be clearly explained on the website to alert users to their responsibilities regarding permitting requirements. Additional information, such as links to descriptions of identifying characteristics for wetlands and Town contact information for those looking to obtain further information, should be provided.


GOAL 5

Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town’s open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities through installation of wayfinding and trailheads, provision of updated trail maps, and community engagement efforts.

 **R5.1**

UTILIZE MULTIPLE OUTLETS FOR PUBLICIZING THE OPEN SPACE, TRAILS AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN TOWN.

ON-GOING 

LEAD 

NATICK GIS DEPARTMENT
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUPPORT 

MAPC
NATICK SCHOOLS

The Town should continue to develop and maintain up-to-date, town-wide open space and trail maps and provide them both in digital online and print formats. Maps should be made available on both the Town’s official website and on the GIS Map website portal for the Town of Natick. In many cases, the open space and trails are part of larger networks, or parcels that span Town borders. Maps and depictions of these open spaces and trails should also provide information about the larger networks that these spaces connect to outside of Town boundaries.

As a way to help generate these maps, the Trails Committee should reach out to the schools to help coordinate mapping of the trails with earth science curriculum offered. GPS (global positioning system) software and applications have become increasingly user friendly and engaging younger students in identifying and mapping trails around Town will help garner a lasting appreciation for the Town’s natural settings.

   **R5.2**

4-7 YEARS 

LEAD 

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 








OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TRAILS COMMITTEE
HISTORIC COMMISSION








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







Developing wayfinding and signage that is consistent helps define an overall character and identity for the Town. Formalizing entry points and connections helps orient both residents and visitors as they make their way throughout Town. Developing a hierarchy and thematic signage system that incorporates multiple Town resources will help communicate the interconnected nature of the various elements. Through the use of thematic signage, parks and civic and cultural resources will be better identified as Town destinations, while trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and roads will be more strongly associated with an overall connectivity network for the Town.

















Example of city wayfinding system







Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Continue to support, expand and maintain Natick’s high quality active and passive open spaces.</p>	<p>R1.1: Pursue strategies that identify and protect multi-benefit open spaces in order to maintain both a high-quality and high-functioning open space network within the Town of Natick.</p>	<p>Make a concerted effort to prioritize protection of open space based on identified characteristics, with higher priority given to parcels that provide a variety of benefits.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
		<p>Create a weighted model in GIS that specifically emphasized parcels that meet prioritized criteria.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Continue to pursue protection of privately held open space through acquisition, conservation restrictions, and easements in order to meet the open space needs of the Town as they evolve over time.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
		<p>Require submission of a digital conservation easement boundary plan as part of the permitting process for any new development.</p> 	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R1.2: Actively explore opportunities to expand & enhance the Town’s active recreation fields and facilities.</p>	<p>Prioritize the recommendations of the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields and incorporate them into future improvement budgets, with an emphasis on expanding the offerings of rectangular multi-use fields throughout town.</p> 	<p>Recreation & Parks Department</p>	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>Add two facilities per year or make improvements annually to allow for heavier use of fields until field usage is at or below industry recommended use levels.</p>	
		<p>Evaluate the contribution of fees to maintenance and consider increasing fees assessed to local sports leagues for use of the Town’s playing fields.</p> 	<p>Recreation & Parks Department</p>	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Add lighting to recreational facilities in order to extend the hours of use where appropriate. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		
		Explore the pros and cons of installing artificial turf athletic fields at appropriate locations.	Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	7-12+ YEARS		
	R1.3: Explore opportunities to incorporate a greater variety of open space and recreational offerings throughout Town.	Consider pocket parks as an option in the Town Center area during review of development proposals and when tax delinquent or parcels that are unusable for other purposes are available for acquisition. 	Community & Economic Development Department Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		
		Continue to work with FIDO of Natick, Inc. to approve a dog park location within the town boundary. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Install or expand offerings of community gardens and splash pads as per the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields recommendations. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Evaluate feasibility for the Town to partner with adjacent towns to help provide a community pool amenity to Natick residents. 	Recreation & Parks Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen	7-12+ YEARS		
	R1.4: Ensure that the maintenance budgets and revenue streams for open space and recreation are commensurate with expansion of open space area and amenity offerings.	Revisit the Parks and Open Space budget upon acquisition of future parcels and expansion of facilities. 	Board of Selectmen Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	ON-GOING	Open Space budgets demonstrate per capita spending levels commensurate with comparison communities, reviewed on a three year basis.	

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Continue to seek other supporting revenue streams and/or maintenance options for its open space and recreational facilities, including developer payments to the FAR Stabilization Fund, maintenance agreements with private owners for POPS (privately owned and maintained public spaces) and federal, state, and private grants like the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation and the Massachusetts LAND and PARC programs. 	Board of Selectmen Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	ON-GOING		
Goal 2: Increase the number of public connections, perimeter trails and access points to Natick's lakes, rivers and wetlands.	R2.1: Work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to increase the number of access points around Lake Cochituate.	Continue working with DCR to incorporate a gated connection from the Cochituate Rail Trail to the Cochituate State Park main area. 	Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Open Space Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		
		Install areas for seating and overlooks adjacent to Lake Cochituate with direct access from J.J. Lane Park. 	Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Open Space Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		
		Explore opportunities to provide a second connection from the Cochituate Rail Trail directly to the lake. 	Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Open Space Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		
		Consider accessible kayak launches as part of the improvements for parks around Lake Cochituate to help expand boating access for residents of Natick. 	Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Open Space Advisory Committee	4-7 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Continue to monitor the status of the National Guard site for opportunities to expand open space access around the lake. 	Public Works Department MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Open Space Advisory Committee	ON-GOING		
	R2.2: Expand public access to the Charles River.	Designate the Charles River as a "Blueway." 	Open Space Advisory Committee Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	1-5 YEARS		
		Provide kayak launches along the Charles River as per the 2016 Natick Master Plan for Parks and Fields. 	Open Space Advisory Committee Recreation & Parks Department	Public Works Department	4-7 YEARS		
Goal 3: Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect Natick's open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the Town.	R3.1: Improve the connectivity of the Town's open and recreational spaces through both (1) better connections between trail systems and parks and (2) coordinated improvements to bike/pedestrian transportation infrastructure. 	Focus future parcel and easement acquisitions on improving connectivity of the Town's existing open space.	Recreation & Parks Department Public Works Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Trails Committee	ON-GOING		Transportation
		Work to improve and expand the open space access points shown on Figure 7.3. On-street improvements to the overall open space connectivity should be incorporated into town infrastructure improvements; bike and pedestrian improvements should be included as roadway improvement projects are completed along the routes shown. 	Recreation & Parks Department Public Works Department	Open Space Advisory Committee Trails Committee	ON-GOING	Increase trail connectivity and park entrances incrementally to achieve improved access coverage, review every two years.	Transportation
	R3.2: Re-instate the Trails Committee and combine overlapping committees. 	Formally reinstate the Trails Committee with a clear chair and co-chair lead identified. Create a single Trails Oversight Committee from the existing committees that cover projects related to trails.	Trails Committee	Open Space Advisory Committee	1-5 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 4: Preserve and protect Natick's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.</p>	<p>R4.1: Prioritize parcels for protection that serve as wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors or water quality protection.</p>	<p>Prioritize corridors depicted on Maps 7.11 & 7.12 that would produce multiple benefits for the open space network as a whole. Rank open space importance when the Town is considering future open space parcel acquisitions or making conservation recommendations as part of the review process for development proposals.</p> 	<p>Open Space Advisory Committee Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
	<p>R4.2: Update the Aquifer Protection Overlay District Bylaw.</p>	<p>Update the Aquifer Protection Overlay District Bylaw.</p> 	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board Open Space Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Environmental Compliance Officer</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R4.3: Implement appropriate Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for Lake Cochituate.</p>	<p>A final TMDL report for the lake should be compiled and corrective action should be taken to move this water body off the list of impaired waters.</p> 	<p>Conservation Commission</p>	<p>MA Department of Conservation and Recreation MA Department of Environmental Protection</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R4.4: Implement green infrastructure improvements on town property.</p>	<p>Implement pilot projects for green infrastructure, low-impact design and increased biodiversity on Town properties within the priority natural resource protection zones.</p> 	<p>Public Works Department</p>	<p>Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>4-7 YEARS</p>		
	<p>R4.5: Actively encourage protection of the priority natural resource Protection areas through implementation of green infrastructure on private property.</p>	<p>Develop and provide informational pamphlets and lists of recommended green infrastructure strategies, native/natural landscaping strategies, and organic maintenance practices to all projects seeking a permit within the priority zones.</p> 	<p>Building Department Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Provide property owners with information regarding MA Chapter 61A&B which allow a reduced tax rate for properties for agricultural, horticultural, or recreational purposes.</p> 	<p>Building Department Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>Conservation Commission Planning Board</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
	R4.6: Extend the Flood Plain Overlay District protections in order to account for future climatic changes and resulting increased impact zones.	Provide a crowd-sourced website for flood reporting in order to better document the areas of Town that will need increased flood protection in the coming decades. 	Natick GIS Dept Board of Selectmen Planning Board	Conservation Commission Sustainability Committee FEMA Regional Office	1-5 YEARS		
		Extend the review of flood plain overlay district to include review requirements for the FEMA 500-year flood plain areas. 	Board of Selectmen Planning Board	Conservation Commission Sustainability Committee FEMA Regional Office	4-7 YEARS		
	R4.7: Include all water resource jurisdictional layers on the natick GIS Map website and use layer naming consistent with the town bylaws.	Add the boundary layers for the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, Flood Plain Overlay District, and Wetlands Buffer Zone to the online Town GIS Map Website. 	Natick GIS Dept	Planning Board	1-5 YEARS		
Goal 5: Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town's open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities through installation of wayfinding and trailheads, provision of updated trail maps, and community engagement efforts.	R5.1: Utilize multiple outlets for publicizing the open space, trails, and natural resources in Town.	Continue to develop and maintain up-to-date, town-wide open space and trail maps and provide them both in digital online and print formats. 	Natick GIS Dept Open Space Advisory Committee	MAPC Natick Schools	ON-GOING		Economic Development
	R5.2: Develop a consistent system of wayfinding that connects open spaces, trail networks, transportation resources, and cultural amenities throughout the town. 	Develop wayfinding and signage that is consistent helps define an overall character and identity for the Town.	Community & Economic Development	Open Space Advisory Committee Trails Committee Historic Commission	4-7 YEARS		Economic Development Historic & Cultural Resources Land Use



8. Public Facilities and Services

KEY FINDINGS

- + The Town employs 300 full-time employees and 175 part-time employees.
- + In 2016, over 9,500 residents took part in programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- + The Morse Institute Library houses over 200,000 books and serves between 900 and 1,000 people per day.
- + Natick's school enrollment has grown by over 1,100 children in the last decade.
- + The Town has a AAA Bond Rating, and is on sound financial ground.

Introduction

Community facilities are places that house municipal programs and services and provide vital space for the administration of local government. Community services represent what a unit of local government does to meet the needs of its residents and businesses. These concepts – the functions of town government, what it does, and how and where – are critical to the continued delivery of services to everyone in Natick. Over time, the duties of town governments everywhere have evolved due to changes in federal and state laws and public expectations. Natick provides many different types of services for residents and businesses, and will need to continue monitoring fiscal conditions and local desires to balance efficient service delivery and service quality. This chapter provides an overview of the different types of facilities and services provided in Natick to benchmark where the Town is today.

Existing Conditions

Municipal Facilities

The Town of Natick's Facilities Management Department currently manages thirty-four individual buildings and properties which include twenty-six municipal buildings and eight school buildings. Staff in the Facilities Management Department is responsible for the on-going maintenance of over 1.1 million square feet of built space across Town-owned buildings.¹ These buildings have a combined insurance value of over \$276 million.² This section lists and briefly describes the buildings the Town is responsible for maintaining.

Town Hall

Natick's Town Hall occupies the corner of East Central Street and Church Street. It opened in 1998 as part of the larger downtown revitalization project that brought in a new town hall, police and fire station, and an expansion to the Morse Institute Library. This expansion of public facilities was significantly funded by the redevelopment of the Natick Mall in the early 1990s. Most Town departments are in Town Hall, including the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Finance Department, Community and Economic Development, Health Department, and the School Department. The three-story building includes offices, conference rooms, and the primary meeting room for major Town boards. A small parking area for staff and visitors is located on the east side of Church Street across from Town Hall.

1 FY 2017 Preliminary Facilities Budget. March 24, 2016.

2 Natick Insurance Policy, Statement of Value. Town of Natick, FY 2016.

Public Safety Buildings

In 1998, the Town opened a public safety building at 20-32 East Central Street, creating a combined police station and fire station (Fire Station #1). The Fire Department, occupying the east end of the building, has five large bay doors for vehicle access and storage in addition to offices, general storage, and personnel space for the Fire Department employees. The Police Department occupies the west end of the building which includes a large parking lot to the rear for police and civilian vehicles. The total size of the building is just under 54,000 square feet.³

The Fire Department has three additional fire stations located across Natick to meet response time requirements. The remaining stations are smaller and built earlier than Fire Station #1. These include:



Natick Fire Station

- + **Fire Station #2:** a two-story building consisting of 2,050 square feet of space constructed in 1950. The station is located at 45 Eliot Street and serves the South Natick area.
- + **Fire Station #3:** a one-story building consisting of 3,200 square feet of space constructed in 1958. The station is located at 2 Rhode Island Drive and serves the northeastern side of Natick.
- + **Fire Station #4:** a two-story building consisting of 4,982 square feet of space constructed in 1958. The station is located at 268 Speen Street and serves the western portion of Natick around the Natick Mall area (The Golden Triangle). Design of the new station is underway and a \$15.5 million Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion for the station was approved at the 2018 Fall Annual Town Meeting.

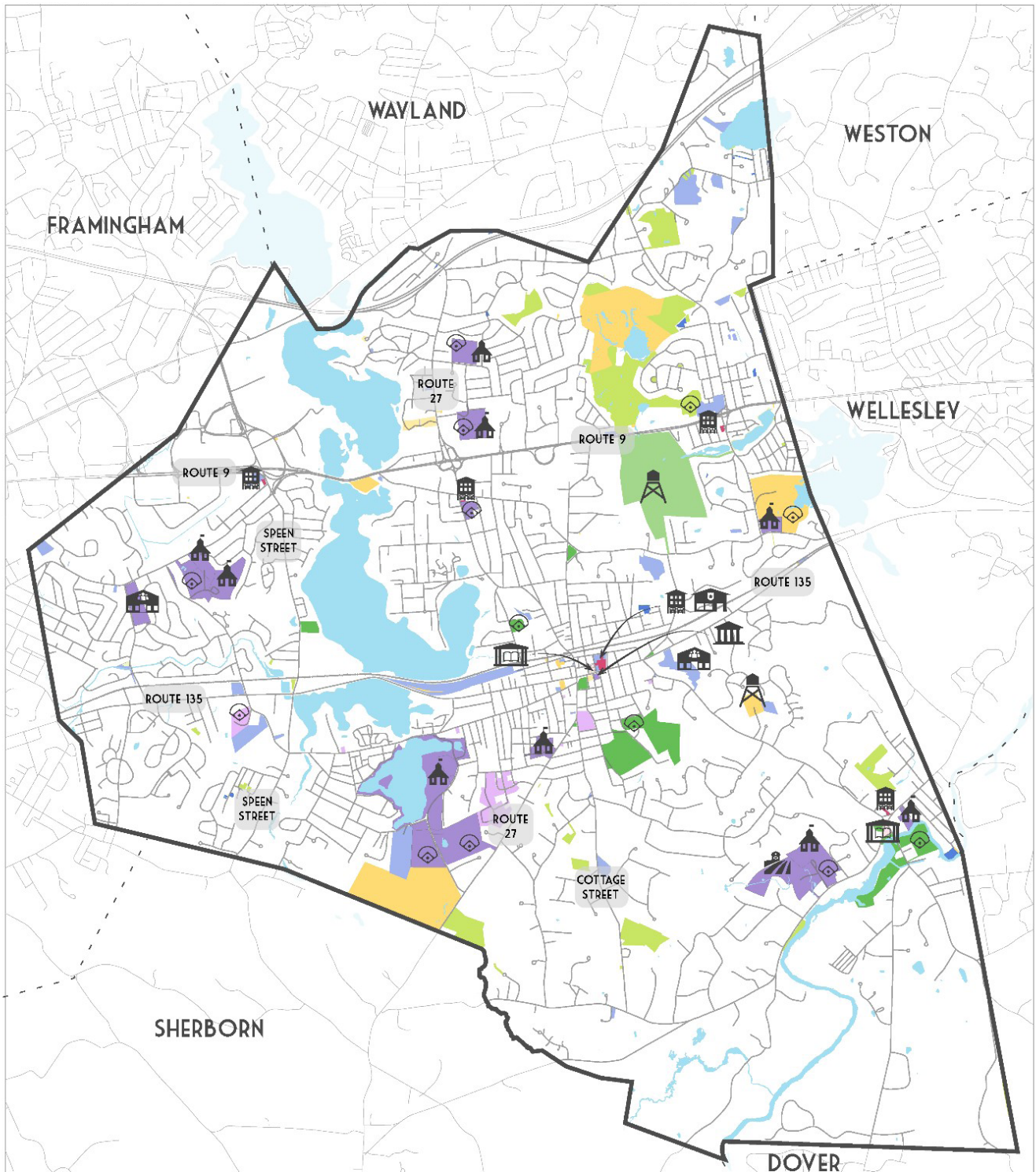
Public Works

Constructed in 1980, the Public Works Department (DPW) facility at 75 West Street is a two-story 50,000 square foot facility that houses all the different divisions within DPW. This includes water and sewer, engineering, land facilities and natural resources, maintenance, and geographic information systems (GIS). DPW also has a 14,500 square foot maintenance garage located at 75 West Street that was constructed in 1993. The Town also has storage and maintenance space at their facility located at 17 Oak Street. This space includes storage for landscaping materials and road salt.

Schools

Natick's public school system is one of the pillars of the Town, and a top reason new residents are moving here. One of the consequences of having an attractive community with good schools is increased enrollment. The recent increases in school enrollment, coupled with the projected continuation of those increases, is placing immense pressure on the current school facilities to accommodate the rapid increase in enrollment. The Town is now looking at ways to increase school capacity through a combination of new schools, modular classrooms, and redistribution of children at the elementary school level. Currently, the maintenance of school facilities falls under the Director of Facilities who oversees school custodians and maintenance staff.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all information on Natick Town-owned facilities came from the Natick Insurance Policy, Statement of Value. Town of Natick, FY 2016.



PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

**L
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- Parks & Recreation Department
- Forest Committee
- Conservation Commission
- Cemetery
- Public Works
- Board of Selectmen/Town Hall
- Fire Department
- Town of Natick
- Tax Possession
- School
- Housing Authority
- Library

- School
- Police Station
- Fire Station
- Town Hall
- Library
- Water Tower
- Community/Rec Center
- Farm
- Recreation Fields

MAP 8.1: NATICK'S PUBLIC FACILITIES

*This map shows the approximate location of public facilities in Natick.
Source: Town of Natick, CSS, RKG Associates*



Elementary Schools

Natick has five public elementary schools spread throughout in order to serve the different neighborhoods. These schools include:

- + **Bennett-Hemenway School:** 22 East Evergreen Street. The Bennett School was last renovated in 1998 and is approximately 71,000 square feet in size. The school was originally built to serve 600 students. The total enrollment at Ben-Hem was 625 students in 2016.
- + **Brown School:** 1 Jean Burke Drive. The Brown School was last renovated in 1975 and is approximately 55,200 square feet in size. In 2016, the Town added six modular classrooms to help ease capacity issues. The school was originally built to serve 450 students, but the new modular classrooms have increased that capacity to 600. The total enrollment at Brown was 512 students in 2016.
- + **Johnson School:** 99 South Main Street. The Johnson School was last renovated in 1940 and is approximately 26,800 square feet in size. The school was originally built to serve 250 students. The total enrollment at Johnson was 223 students in 2016.
- + **Lilja School:** 41 Bacon Street. The Lilja School was last renovated in 1998 and is approximately 54,000 square feet in size. The school was originally built to serve 450 students. Natick is planning to add six new modular classrooms to the Lilja School, which will increase capacity to 600 students. The total enrollment at Lilja was 418 students in 2016.
- + **Memorial School:** 107 Eliot Street. The Memorial School was last renovated in 1960 and is approximately 60,500 square feet in size. The school was originally built to serve 450 students.⁴ The total enrollment at Memorial was 436 students in 2016.⁵

Middle Schools

Natick has two middle schools which are located about 2.5 miles apart on the northern side of Natick:

- + **Kennedy Middle School:** 1 Phillip Lucier Drive. The Kennedy School was last renovated in 1965 and is approximately 106,000 square feet in size. The school was originally built to serve 600 students. In 2012, the Town added six modular classrooms at Kennedy to ease capacity issues. The total enrollment at Kennedy was 647 students in 2016. Funding for the design and construction of a new Kennedy Middle School was approved at the 2018 Special Town Meeting #1. The Massachusetts School Building Authority also has approved funding.
- + **Wilson Middle School:** 24 Rutledge Road. The Wilson School was last renovated in 2003 and is approximately 135,000 square feet in size. The Wilson Middle School is also facing capacity challenges. When originally constructed it was designed to educate 850 students, and it is currently educating 958.⁶

⁴ Original building capacity numbers provided by James Kane, Natick Facilities Manager, March 29, 2017.

⁵ Enrollment numbers provided by Natick Public Schools, Enrollment Projections Presentation from December 6, 2016.

⁶ Ibid.

Natick High School

The newest of all the schools in the Natick Public School system, Natick High School was constructed in 2012 and is approximately 255,000 square feet in size. It is located at 15 West Street, and has frontage on Dug Pond. The high school campus also includes playing fields, tennis courts, and a substantial array of rooftop solar panels. The Town is currently exploring the idea of creating solar canopies over the parking lot at the high school. The High School was originally designed to accommodate 1,600 students. Enrollment as of 2016 was 1,546.



Bacon Free Library

Libraries

The Town of Natick is fortunate to have two beautifully designed libraries. South Natick is served by the historical Bacon Free Library, which is a small 5,500 square foot building constructed in 1880.⁷ The library provides traditional library services and programming, and is also home to the Natick Historical Society Museum which has space on the bottom floor.

The second library in Natick is the Morse Institute Library. Originally constructed in 1808 with a volume of one hundred books, the library provides a wide range of printed material in circulation, other forms of media, and programming. In 1994, the Town voted to spend \$7.4 million for renovations and a major addition to the library. The new facility opened in 1997, and tripled the size of the previous space to expand printed material, digital offerings, and an archive room.⁸ Today, the Morse Library is just under 61,000 square feet in size and not only serves as a lending site for books and media, but also provides programs, space, and uses similar to a community center.

Community Center and Recreation

Natick also offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor community and recreation facilities beyond the traditional parks and recreation fields and playgrounds.

Natick Community-Senior Center

Opened in 2012, the new \$10.25 million Community-Senior Center at 117 East Central Street is about 30,000 square feet in size and offers the second-largest gymnasium in Town, bathrooms and locker rooms, a fitness center, and offices for Town departments. It is in a walkable convenient location just outside Natick Center.⁹ The Community-Senior Center currently houses the Council on Aging, Human Resources, and Veteran Services staff.

Cole Center

Located at 179 Boden Lane, the Cole Center was constructed as a school in 1956 and was retrofitted into a 25,000-square foot recreation center in 1993. The Center offers a wide range of youth sports activities through the Recreation and Parks Department. While the space is programmed by Recreation and Parks, the building is maintained by the Facilities Management Department.

⁷ Bacon Free Library. <http://baconfreelibrary.org/about/>

⁸ Morse Institute Library. <http://morseinstitute.org/about/history/>

⁹ Boston Globe, "\$10.25m Center Opening in Natick". September, 2012. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/north/2012/09/15/natick-senior-community-center-opening-next-month/05BEaRmAjyDSCxEwwXy7QI/story.html>

Chase Arena

The William L. Chase Arena is a Town of Natick public ice skating facility which is operated through a partnership between the Town and FMC Ice Sports that began in 2003. The facility is located at 35 Windsor Avenue, and is approximately 32,500 square feet in size. In addition to the ice skating rink, the facility includes a heated conference room, facilities for birthday parties, and a small café.

Community Organic Farm

Founded in 1975, the Natick Community Organic Farm is a nonprofit, certified-organic farm providing open space and farm products for Natick residents all year long. In addition to farming plots, the site includes a barn, greenhouse, nature center, and solar arrays. While the Farm is officially under the auspices of the Conservation Commission and has its own farming staff to oversee day-to-day operations, the buildings and structures on site are maintained by the Facilities Management Department.

Facilities Planning

Natick does not have an updated and comprehensive facilities study looking at each Town-owned building to assess the condition and a long-term strategy for repairs and on-going maintenance. The Town does look at individual facilities and develops shorter-term needs and funding requests that feed directly into the five-year Capital Improvement Plan. The Facilities Management Department covers Town facilities and school facilities, making annual requests for improvements to both types of facilities annually through the Capital Improvement Plan which feeds into budget appropriations at Town Meeting. The Fiscal Year 2017-2021 draft Capital Improvement Program indicates that the Facilities Management Department is requesting about \$2.8 million for a variety of capital projects at Town and school facilities. The total request across the five-year time horizon is \$8.6 million.¹⁰ An interview conducted with the Director of Facilities indicated a desire to complete a longer-term, more comprehensive assessment of all Town-owned facilities and programs, both on-going maintenance needs and major capital investments over a twenty-year period.¹¹

Energy Efficiency

The Town of Natick had been a municipal leader in sustainability and energy efficiency for over a decade when the Town joined ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability in 2004 and established a baseline greenhouse gas emissions inventory and reduction goals. In the spring of 2010, Natick became one of the first Green Communities in Massachusetts and established a baseline for energy consumption and a plan to reduce consumption by 20 percent in five years. These efforts were led by the former Environmental Compliance Officer (now retired), and now by the Sustainability Coordinator who reports directly to the Town Administrator.

The Town has undertaken substantial efforts to reduce energy consumption for Town-owned facilities (both Town and school buildings), and has been pursuing ways to generate energy through renewable sources such as solar arrays on roofs and solar canopies over municipal parking lots. The Town has also invested in energy audits, lighting upgrades, HVAC controls, water system improvements, and building monitoring systems to track and improve energy efficiency. Natick met the Green Community's goal of reducing energy consumption by 20 percent, which saves the Town approximately \$387,000 annually.¹²

10 FY2017-2021 Draft Capital Improvement Plan, Natick.

11 Interview with James Kane, Facilities Director. September 28, 2016.

12 Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, Town of Natick - Municipal Energy Efficiency Case Study, December 2015.

Municipal Services

The Natick Town Administrator serves as the Chief Operating Officer and is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Town Administrator oversees the daily operations of the Town, advises on policies and procedures, and enforces the Town's Bylaws as passed by Town Meeting. This position is also responsible for the management of all Town departments (excluding the School Department), and Town funds, providing support to the volunteer committee system, working with other levels of government, and managing special projects for the Board of Selectmen. The Town payroll includes about 300 full-time employees and 175 part-time employees,¹³ and the School Department employs 632 full- and part-time staff.¹⁴ Town employees and local boards and committees provide a variety of local government services to residents and businesses.

Town Departments

Administration and Finance

Natick's Town Administrator oversees the daily operations of the Town and works directly for the Board of Selectmen. Each year the Town Administrator prepares an annual budget in coordination with department heads for submittal to the Board of Selectmen, which is then reviewed by the Finance Committee, and ultimately presented to Town Meeting.

The Town Clerk is an elected position in Natick, and serves as the "gateway into the community" providing information to residents and visitors. The Clerk is the chief election official, overseeing polling places; maintains the Town's Bylaws and Charter; and issues state licenses and permits.¹⁵

Natick's financial operations are handled by several different departments that all fall under the auspices of the Finance Department. In 2012, Town Meeting voted to centralize the different finance functions under one Finance Department which is overseen by the Deputy Town Administrator/Finance Director. The three-member elected Board of Assessors oversees the annual valuation of property in Natick and determines the rate of taxation for vote at Town Meeting. The Board is supported by the Director of Assessing and staff members in the Assessor's Office. Staff in the Assessor's Office evaluate about 1,300 buildings each year plus hundreds of sales. A substantial portion of evaluations are done in-house with current staff, but some specific evaluations will necessitate the use of an outside consultant (particularly commercial properties).¹⁶

The Finance Department also includes the Town Collector/Treasurer who is responsible for billing, collecting, and investing all monies due to the Town through taxes, permits, and fees. The Treasurer also issues all debt for short- and long-term borrowing, the maintenance of any property taken by tax title, and disposition of foreclosed property. The Town Comptroller is appointed to a three-year term by the Board of Selectmen and is responsible for maintaining the Town's financial records. This includes records of all receipts and payables, including Town payroll. The Comptroller maintains accounts payable records for both the Town and the School Department. Together, each of these offices works with the Town Administrator, Finance Committee, and Board of Selectmen to manage and strengthen the Town's fiscal health.



Natick Town Hall

13 Richard Tranfaglia, Natick Human Resources Director.

14 Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

15 Town of Natick, <http://www.natickma.gov/358/Town-Clerk>

16 Interview with Jan Dangelo and Eric Henderson, Assessor's Office. September, 2016.

Public Safety

The Natick Police Department employs eighty-one full- and part-time staff members including the Police Chief, four Division Commanders, nine Patrol Sergeants, thirty-one Patrol Officers, and seven Investigators.¹⁷ The Police Department also employs several administrative support staff, an Animal Control Officer, School Resource Officers, and ten Dispatchers. The Police also coordinate with the Natick Police Auxiliary which assists with traffic management at events and parades in Town.

The Natick Fire Department is responsible for providing emergency fire control, emergency medical care, disaster mitigation, and life rescue assistance. As was noted earlier, the Fire Department operates out of four separate stations located across Natick. The Department employs eighty-eight full-time staff which includes a Fire Chief, five Deputy Chiefs, five Captains, fifteen Lieutenants, and fifty-six Firefighters. The Department also includes Administrative Assistants and Training Officers. Thirty-four percent of the firefighting staff are certified as paramedics, and 99 percent are certified as EMTs. An overwhelming majority of the calls the Fire Department responds to are for emergency medical services.¹⁸ The Fire Department is also responsible for smoke detector inspections and quarterly fire inspections in buildings across Town.



Public Works Building

Public Works

Natick has a combined Public Works Department (DPW) which is responsible for the administration and maintenance of the Town's water and waste-water system, trash collection, municipal energy efforts, vehicle and equipment maintenance, roadways and sidewalks, storm-water drainage, engineering, GIS, common areas, parks, and trees in the public right-of-way.¹⁹ The DPW employs fifty-three full-time staff, and seven part-time staff across several divisions which include:

- + **Water and Sewer:** responsible for operating and maintaining the Town's 10 water wells, the water treatment plant, and thirty-six sewer pump stations across town. They are also responsible for maintaining and replacing sewer and water pipes, as well as 1,400 hydrants. The Board of Selectmen in Natick serve as the Water and Sewer Commission and are responsible for setting the water and sewer rates.
- + **Administration:** responsible for the supervision, administration support, and secretarial services to the DPW as a whole. This includes preparation of payroll and working with the Comptroller to track account transactions. The staff also assists with resident issues and handling emergency and storm-related phone calls.
- + **Engineering:** responsible for providing guidance and technical support to a wide range of departments, boards, and commissions within Town government, as well as citizens in Natick. This division is the primary repository for roadway plans, site plans, and utility plans. Engineering is also responsible for calculating and maintaining construction bonds and managing stormwater permits.
- + **Highway and Sanitation:** responsible for the maintenance of the Town's 195 miles of roadway which includes lane and crosswalk striping, signage, catch basins, street sweeping, filling potholes, and snow removal services.

¹⁷ Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

¹⁸ Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

¹⁹ Town of Natick, <http://www.natickma.gov/249/Public-Works>

- + **Land Facilities and Natural Resources:** responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of trees on public property, athletic fields, cemeteries, parks, and playgrounds. The division works closely with the Recreation and Parks, School, Conservation, and Facilities Management Departments in Natick.
- + **Equipment Maintenance:** responsible for the maintenance of the Town's vehicle fleet and equipment.
- + **Geographic Information Systems (GIS):** responsible for maintaining and upgrading the Town's digital and online inventory of spatial information such as tax parcels, public utilities, roadway infrastructure, surface water, aerial imagery, and public safety data. The GIS division maintains an online mapping portal for public use as well.²⁰

Community and Economic Development

The Community and Economic Development Department administers and enforces land development and building regulations that have been adopted by the Town and/or the State of Massachusetts. This includes the administration and enforcement of the Zoning Bylaw, building codes and permits, and the protection of natural resources. The Department employs ten full-time staff members and six part-time staff members, most of whom are located in the Building Department to assist with administering permits and carrying out inspections. Community and Economic Development is a consolidated department that includes the following divisions:

- + **Planning and Economic Development:** responsible for short- and long-term land use, economic development, and transportation planning across the Town. Planning staff undertake on-going reviews of development projects, Special Permits, and subdivisions to ensure consistency with the Zoning Bylaw and that permit conditions are being met. Staff assists a substantial number of groups and boards in Natick including the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Open Space Committee, Natick Center Associates, the Economic Development Committee, and the Board of Selectmen. Staff are also serving as the day-to-day contacts for this Master Plan on behalf of the Planning Board.
 - + Economic Development staff are responsible for creating a business-friendly community that is attractive to new companies looking to locate in Natick, and ensuring current businesses remain in town. The Economic Development Planner interfaces with local boards and committees, as well as regional entities like the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce and the MetroWest Visitors Bureau.
 - + The Planning Division serves as primary staff to the five member elected Planning Board in Natick which has statutory authority for preparing the Town's Master Plan, holding public hearings and making recommendations to Town Meeting with regard to zoning changes, and approving, modifying, or rejecting subdivision applications. Planning staff assist the Zoning Board of Appeals, which is a five-member board appointed by the Board of Selectmen to hear and decide on appeals from decisions of the Building Inspector, Special Permits as allowed in the Zoning Bylaws, variances from the Zoning Bylaws, and other appeals in accordance with Chapter 40A.

20

Natick MapGeo Site: <https://natickma.mapgeo.io/?latlng=42.289774%2C-71.352428&zoom=12>

- + **Building Department:** The Building Commissioner and Building Inspectors are responsible for permitting and monitoring the construction and alteration of all buildings or structures in Natick. This includes the inspection of built structures, stoves, fences, signs, and pools. They are also charged with enforcing standards for safety, energy, fire, sanitary, and access. The Building Department is responsible for establishing fees for inspections, certification of inspections, and the enforcement and administration of Natick’s Zoning Bylaws.
- + **Conservation Commission:** Natick’s part-time Conservation Agent provides staff support to the Conservation Commission. The Commission is a seven-member board appointed by the Board of Selectmen to oversee the protection and preservation of natural resources in Natick. The Commission reviews projects for compliance with G.L. c. 131, section 40, the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act.

Community Services



Natick Community-Senior Center

In Massachusetts, Community Services typically includes some form of healthcare and wellness, social services for the elderly, and financial assistance for veterans. The Community Services Department in Natick is comprised of Recreation and Parks, Council on Aging, Human Services, Veteran’s Services, and the Natick Community Organic Farm. In Natick, the Health Department is a separate department responsible for day-to-day operations, while the three-member Board of Health is responsible for setting town-wide policies.

Within Community Services, the Council on Aging division provides social assistance, transportation, and programming services to the elderly. The Division is advised by a sixteen-member Council that is appointed to three-year terms by the Board of Selectmen. The Council on Aging is staffed by five full-time and four part-time employees who are responsible for providing an array of activities, programs, and services to meet the educational, social, health, and wellness of elders, families, and individuals with disabilities in Natick.²¹

A large percentage of the programming for the Council takes place at the Community-Senior Center. The Town’s senior population, similar to many other towns in Massachusetts, has been growing and will continue to grow, placing additional strains on programming and transportation services in the future.²² There is only one part-time staff person who is responsible for transportation for seniors and disabled residents. This service is very popular, and is constrained by both staffing and space on the current vehicle fleet. The Town has one twelve-person van and one newly acquired car which can seat two people. The Town has a pool of volunteer drivers (20-25) who will drive residents to medical appointments and are eligible for mileage reimbursement from the Town.²³

The Community Services Department also encompasses Human Services and Veteran’s Services. Human Services is staffed by two full-time employees, one Social Worker and one Outreach Coordinator who are responsible for determining the eligibility of residents for public benefits, referrals for home care services, counseling, subsidized housing, and insurance. The Division also provides advocacy and crisis intervention. The Veteran’s Services Division is staffed by one full-time Veteran’s Agent and one full-time Executive Assistant. This Division is responsible for assisting Natick’s veterans and their families with the State’s Veteran’s Benefits Program and filing for federal benefits.

21 Town of Natick, <http://www.natickma.gov/626/Council-on-Aging>

22 Interview with Susan Ramsey, Director of Council on Aging. September, 2016.

23 Ibid.

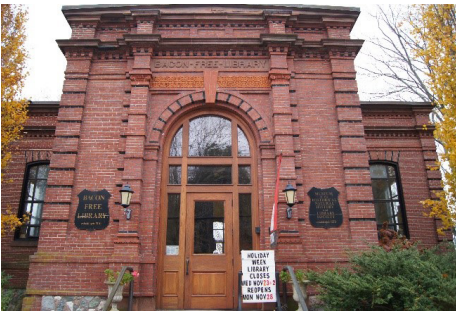
Finally, the Community Services Department is responsible for the Town's Recreation and Parks division. A very large and complex division, Recreation and Parks employs four full-time staff and over two hundred part-time staff that put on 375 individual programs across twenty-nine different parks and facilities in Natick. In Fiscal Year 2016, the Division had over 750 volunteers who dedicated 30,000 hours to programs in town that helped over 9,500 residents participate.²⁴ All of this is overseen by one Director, one Assistant Director, one Program and Events Director, and a ¾ time Special Needs Coordinator. The repairs and maintenance of town-owned fields, playgrounds, and buildings are taken care of by the Facilities Management Department and the Land Facilities and Natural Resources division of the DPW.



Fields Outside of a Natick Elementary School

Library and Culture

Natick offers its residents access to two public libraries: the Morse Institute Library and the Bacon Free Library. From a budgetary perspective, the two libraries are separate and do not share a budget or staff. The Morse Library, located in Natick Center across from Town Hall, is a 60,000 square foot building housing over 200,000 books. The staff, comprised of sixteen full-time and forty part-time employees, serves between 900 to 1,000 people every day. The library is open Monday through Thursday from 10AM to 9PM, Friday and Saturday from 10AM to 5PM, and Sunday from 2PM to 5PM. Over the last four years, the Morse Library has had close to 300,000 visits and 500,000 pieces of media in circulation each year.²⁵ The library offers free access to print and non-print materials, provides hands-on learning experience for residents in Natick and MetroWest, and serves as a cultural and community gathering space for events and exhibits. The library provides free Wi-Fi and computer access, and offers classes for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, budding entrepreneurs, and youth in the community. As use of the library continues to grow, there are space constraints and staffing constraints that need to be addressed, primarily the addition of a full-time professional bookkeeper.



Bacon Free Library

The Bacon Free Library is a much smaller building which primarily serves the South Natick area. The building itself is a historical landmark in Natick. Constructed in 1880 the 5,500-square foot space had a total circulation of about 39,000 and offered close to 400 programs in 2016. The library is staffed by all part-time employees which include one Director, one Assistant Director, and three Library Assistants.²⁶ The library is currently open Monday from 2PM to 5:30PM, Tuesday from 9:30AM to 8:30PM, Wednesday through Friday from 9:30AM to 5:30PM, and Saturday from 9AM to 1PM. The building is also home to the Natick Historical Society Museum (on the bottom floor) which offers a rich collection of artifacts and local memorabilia.

24

Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

25

Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

26

Ibid.

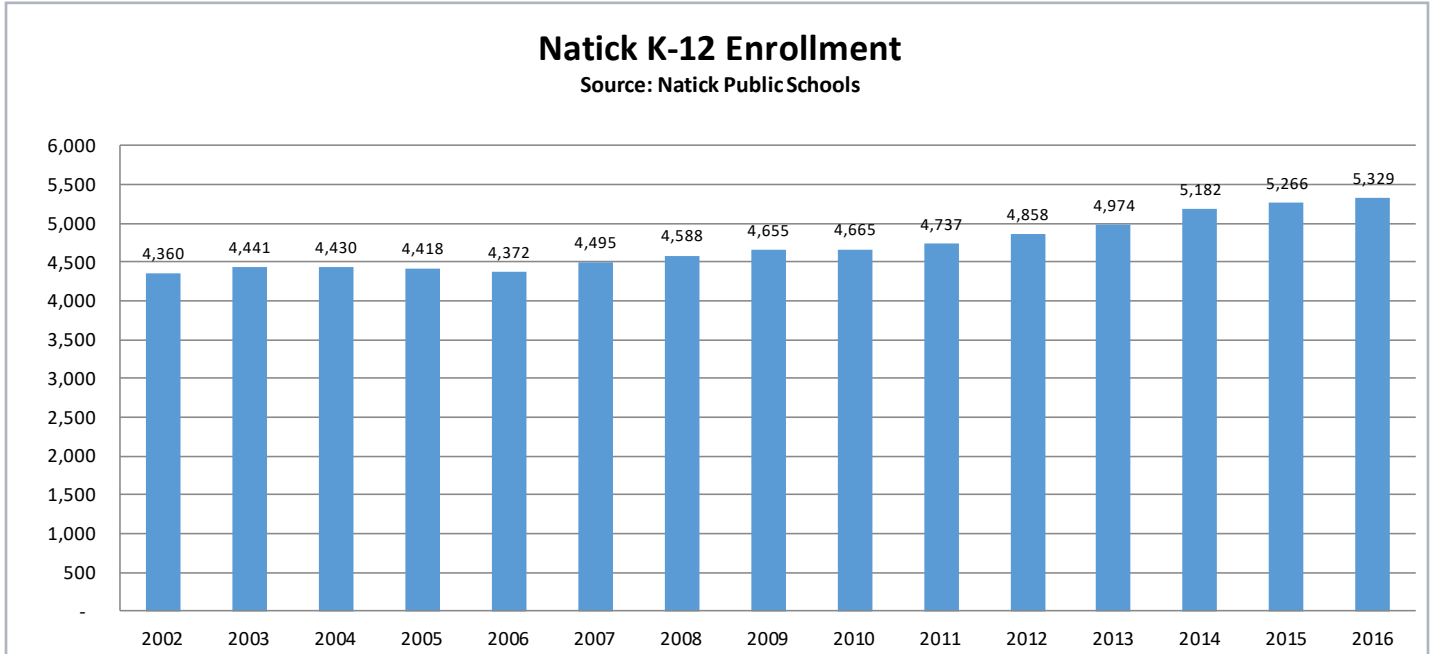


FIGURE 8.1: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Public Schools

The Natick Public School system is comprised of eight individual schools, five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Elementary schools in Natick cover grades K through 4, the middle schools cover grades 5 through 8, and high school covers grades 9 through 12. The most recent enrollment figures for Fiscal Year 2017 have total enrollment at 5,480 students. Since 2006, enrollment has increased by 1,108 students or ninety-three students per year. This increase far outpaced the estimated school projections and the trend of increasing enrollment is anticipated to continue for the next ten years.²⁷

The Natick Public School system is an excellent school district. Natick High School is considered one of the top fifty high schools in Massachusetts. In 2016, over 90 percent of the district's tenth grade students achieved Advanced or Proficient ratings in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.²⁸ The district is overseen by a seven-member elected School Committee. The District employs the equivalent of 313 full-time teachers and department heads, a number that has been increasing over the last several years.²⁹

Town Finances

The Town of Natick's total budget for Fiscal Year 2016 was appropriated at \$134.7 million to pay for municipal services, with 77 percent of revenues derived from the local tax levy.³⁰ In Natick, the residential portion of the tax levy provides 78 percent of the revenue generated by property and personal taxes.³¹ Like most other towns across Massachusetts, Natick obtains operating revenues from a limited number of sources: the tax levy, local receipts generated by various departmental services, state aid, and any uncommitted revenues from previous years ("free cash").

27

Enrollment numbers provided by Natick Public Schools, Enrollment Projections Presentation from December 6, 2016.

28

"Best Public High Schools in 2016". Boston magazine, 2016. <http://www.bostonmagazine.com/best-schools-boston-2016-chart-public-high-schools/>

29

Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

30

Ibid.

31

Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Municipal Data Bank, Municipal Actual Revenues and Expenditures.

The General Fund, or the fund used by municipalities to account for and report the vast majority of local revenues and expenditures, is primarily composed of real and personal property taxes (tax levy). Other General Fund revenues come from excise taxes on motor vehicles, user fees, permits, licenses, and other miscellaneous sources. Local aid from the state accounts for only 8.6 percent of all General Fund revenues. In Fiscal Year 2016, approximately 95 percent of local aid came in the form of Chapter 70 school funding and Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA).³² Natick also receives close to one million dollars a year in Chapter 90 transportation funding from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).³³ Natick also has a self-supporting municipal enterprise fund established for the water and sewer system which generates about \$2.2 million per year.

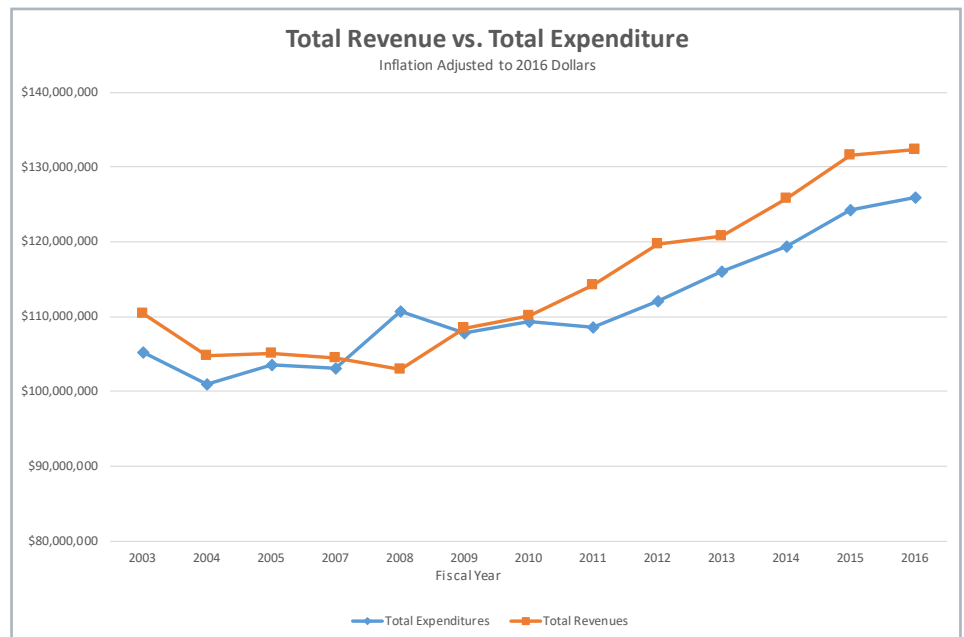


FIGURE 8.2: REVENUE VS. EXPENDITURES

In Natick, residential property makes up 78 percent of the tax levy, while commercial, industrial, and personal property make up the remaining 22 percent.³⁴ This split compares favorably to many communities with similar characteristics in MetroWest and along Route 128. Table 8.1 compares current tax rates and the percent split of each town’s tax levy. Some communities in Massachusetts have chosen to split their tax rates to shift more of the tax burden on either the residential side or the commercial side. Typically, most communities that have a split rate choose to increase the commercial tax rate as a way to lower residential rates, thereby lowering the residential tax burden.

Natick has a single tax rate, which is a positive attribute from the viewpoint of commercial and industrial businesses. Moving to a split tax rate can be detrimental to attracting and retaining commercial and industrial businesses. Small businesses that are leasing space from a building owner would likely see that increased cost passed on in the form of a rent increase. Since commercial properties in Natick are valued using the income approach, an increase in expenditures from a rise in taxes will decrease the valuation of the property. These are just some of the reasons many communities across the Commonwealth have decided to stay with a single tax rate.

32 Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Databank. Fiscal Year 2016.

33 MassDOT, Chapter 90 Apportionment. Fiscal Year 2017.

34 Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Databank.

MUNICIPALITY	RESIDENTIAL	C/I/P	RES. % OF TOTAL LEVY	C/I/P % OF TOTAL LEVY
Natick	13.57	13.57	77.63	22.37
Belmont	12.56	12.56	94.74	5.26
Framingham	17.38	37.98	59.90	40.10
Holliston	18.79	18.79	87.23	12.77
Medford	11.19	21.82	78.95	21.05
Melrose	12.33	18.78	91.79	8.21
Needham	11.54	23.02	75.38	24.62
Reading	14.50	14.50	91.75	8.25
Stoneham	12.70	22.55	82.48	17.52
Wellesley	11.83	11.83	87.08	12.92
Winchester	11.68	11.02	95.49	4.51

TABLE 8.1: TAX RATE COMPARISON

Source: Mass Department of Revenue, Municipal Data Bank.
(C/I/P: Commercial/Industrial/Personal)

Even with the single tax rate, Natick’s average single-family tax bill is comparable to many communities in MetroWest and along Route 128. Table 8.1 again compares Natick to several other towns using a few different financial indicators.

MUNICIPALITY	2013 POPULATION	POPULATION DENSITY SQ. MI.	2016 AVG. SF TAX BILL	2011 DOR INCOME PER CAPITA	2014 EQV PER CAPITA	2016 EXPENDITURES PER CAPITA	2016 LEVY PER CAPITA
Natick	35,214	2,335	\$6,868	\$49,772	\$197,692	\$3,457	\$2,835
Belmont	25,332	5,436	\$11,656	\$73,324	\$227,405	\$3,252	\$3,272
Framingham	70,441	2,804	\$6,065	\$30,811	\$108,051	\$3,339	\$2,505
Holliston	14,162	757	\$7,819	\$49,993	\$148,110	\$3,688	\$3,019
Medford	57,170	7,023	\$4,747	\$32,853	\$128,128	\$2,401	\$1,764
Melrose	27,690	5,904	\$5,746	\$42,056	\$139,994	\$2,812	\$1,929
Needham	29,736	2,358	\$9,587	\$93,395	\$278,902	\$4,295	\$4,012
Reading	25,327	2,551	\$7,242	\$49,019	\$159,026	\$3,254	\$2,467
Stoneham	21,734	3,534	\$5,526	\$37,745	\$145,620	\$2,734	\$2,116
Wellesley	29,090	2,858	\$13,971	\$154,864	\$351,082	\$4,546	\$4,382
Winchester	22,079	3,655	\$10,948	\$90,976	\$273,751	\$3,944	\$3,478

TABLE 8.2: FINANCIAL COMPARISON DATA

Source: Mass Department of Revenue, Municipal Data Bank.
SF: Single Family
DOR: Department of Revenue
EQV: Equalized Valuation

Expenditures

In Fiscal Year 2016, Natick spent about \$3,457 per capita on Town and school services.³⁵ Overall, the Town has seen rising expenditures on the capital and operation sides due to the growing population and the cost of delivering services at the same level or better. One of the largest financial increases has been in the school budget, which was projected to increase by 7.4 percent between FY 16 and FY 17. This pattern is not unique to Natick. Many towns in Massachusetts – especially those that place a high value on the quality of their public schools – have sacrificed municipal spending to preserve school personnel and programs. Natick also has the added challenge of having to accommodate an increasing enrollment in schools that have already outpaced their design capacities. This has necessitated capital projects that have increased capacity in both temporary and permanent ways. Education and Learning expenditures are anticipated to make up 45 percent of the Town’s total expenditures in FY 17.³⁶ Overall costs for education have been increasing since 2003.

The Town has been able to make progress in bringing down municipal expenditures related to employee benefits and health care. Recent negotiations with the General Government and School Department unions should result in over \$1 million in savings over FY 16 costs. Challenges with the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission still impact the Town’s financial stability, with fixed increases of 7 percent through the year 2024.³⁷ This is evidenced in Figure 8.3 showing fixed costs continuing to climb since 2012.

35 Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Databank.

36 Town of Natick, FY 2016 Budget Appropriation.

37 Ibid.

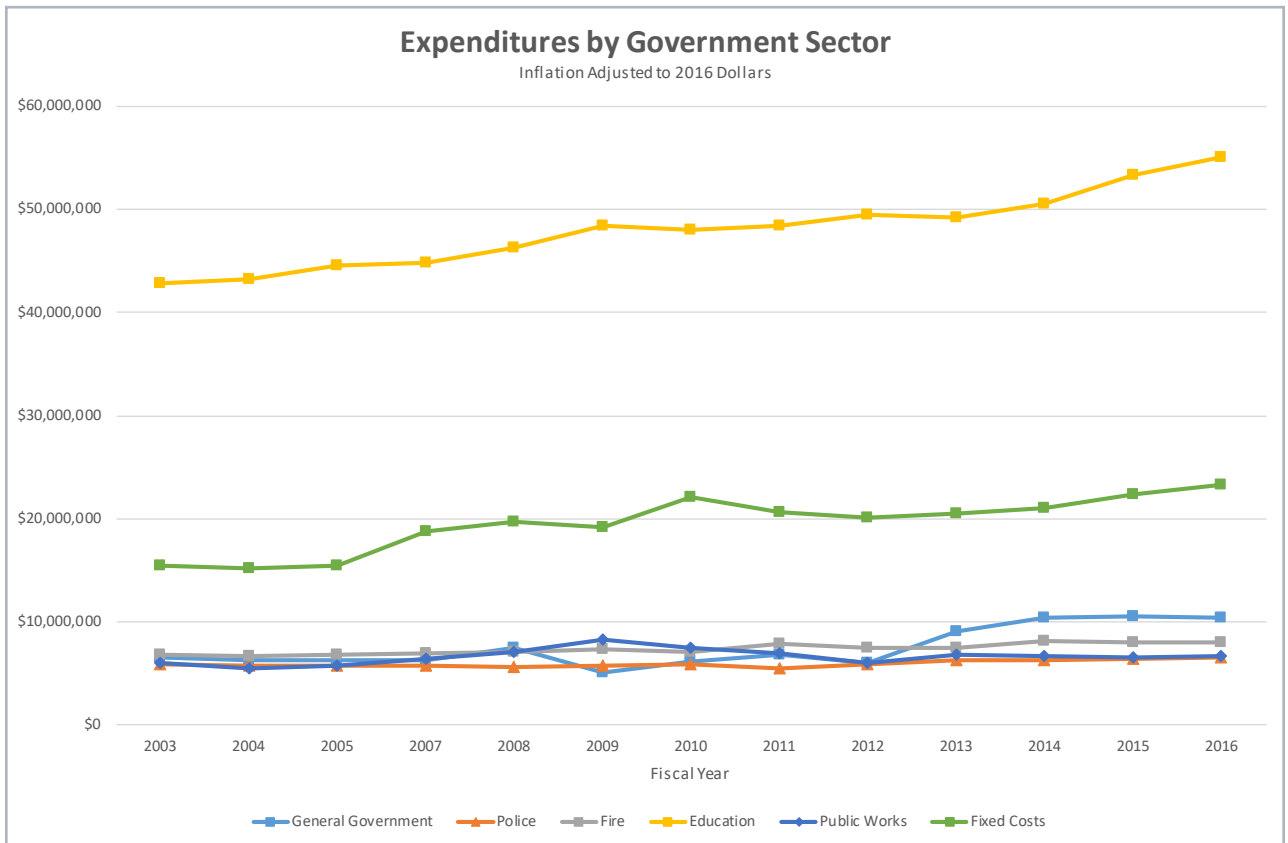


FIGURE 8.3: EXPENDITURES BY SECTOR

Issues and Opportunities

The issues and opportunities described in this section were derived from conversations with Natick residents at the November 2016 Community Meeting, discussions with Town staff and business and property owners, previous plans and studies, and research.

Changing Demographics

Natick's demographics are changing. Like many communities across the Commonwealth, a large cohort of Natick residents is getting older and are choosing to stay in the community. As Boomers age out of the workforce and look to retire, many will remain in their homes where cost and maintenance will be challenging. Natick does not have very many senior housing options, particularly those that are affordably-priced. The Town's Council on Aging is challenged by the growing demand for transportation services, as well as cultural and educational programming at the Community Center. If housing choices are expanded and more seniors are able to remain in Natick, the Town will also need to ensure that Public Safety services, Public Works, Human Services, Council on Aging, the Library, Recreation and Parks are adequately funded and prepared to play a role in making the Town age-friendly. The role of family as the caretaker is changing, therefore the Town needs to begin planning for the accommodations older residents will require.

How will the Town address growth at both ends of the age spectrum moving forward?

On the flip side, Natick is also experiencing an increase in the number of young families with children who are moving to Town. These residents are moving to Natick for a host of reasons which include access to jobs and transportation choices, parks and amenities, a great school system, and housing that is more affordable than many of the surrounding towns. The turnover of the single-family homes in Natick is driving a significant portion of the school enrollment increases, and is also placing additional demands on park and recreation services and the library. The Town needs to continue to evaluate the needs of both younger and older residents and plan ahead for future services, staff capacity, and facility space.

School Enrollment and Capacity Challenges

Over the last decade, the Natick Public School system saw an increase in enrollment of over 1,000 new students. The Town has made strategic investments at several schools, with additional investments forthcoming, to maximize capacity on existing sites with interior reconfigurations and modular classroom additions. At the same time, the Town is working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority to address capacity issues at the Kennedy Middle School. In addition, there are capacity challenges at the Wilson Middle School, as well as the Lilja, Johnson, and Memorial Elementary Schools. If residents in Natick want to continue to have quality school facilities to support their children's education, there will need to be a series of large facility-based investments made to address school capacity in the next three to five years. In addition to facility upgrades, enrollment increases also require staff increases IF the Town wishes to keep current faculty to student ratios (or lower them over time).

“Natick is a mid-sized town that is continuing to grow and change.”

Facilities Management

The excellent educational, recreational, cultural, and environmental services that the Town offers enhance the quality of life for residents, but these and other public services are increasingly expensive. While many of Natick’s public facilities are in good to excellent condition, there are some that will require capital improvements, and some may need to be retired, rebuilt, or rededicated to other purposes. The Town is fortunate to have a full-time Director of Facilities; the Town has not yet developed a long-term capital facilities plan. A twenty-year facilities plan would help the Town understand its potential long-term needs, and budget for maintenance and replacement far in advance.

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PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES 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.



Drawing from an understanding of the existing conditions of Natick's public facilities and services, and keeping in mind the identified issues and opportunities, the Natick 2030+ Team worked with residents to develop goals for the future of facilities and services 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 high quality educational facilities and access to an excellent education for children in Natick.**
- 2. As Natick's population changes, invest in facilities and staff that will provide services to meet residents' needs.**
- 3. Provide adequate and consistent investment to address the ongoing maintenance of Natick's public facilities.**
- 4. Establish a practice of long-term facilities planning that includes identifying future resources needed to address maintenance or construction needs.**
- 5. 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.**

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.



Natick Town Hall.

GOAL 1

Maintain high quality educational facilities and access to an excellent education for children in Natick.

R1.1

INVEST IN FACILITIES AND STAFF TO ENSURE NATICK'S EDUCATION SYSTEM CONTINUES TO THRIVE.

LEAD



NATICK SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE



I-5 YEARS



The Master Plan recognizes the important role of Natick's school system and how many decisions around land use, housing, economic development, and facilities and services are viewed through the lens of their impacts on schools. As such, the Town has committed to investing substantial resources in the existing schools and is planning to invest funds in new schools with the prospect of participation from the State. In the near-term, **the Town should continue its support for the Kennedy Middle School building project, which will provide added capacity for Natick student enrollment** (*funding to design, construct, equip and furnish the new John F. Kennedy Middle School was approved at the 2018 Special Town Meeting #1 on February 27, 2018*).

I-5 YEARS



In addition to the substantial Kennedy Middle School project, the Town is also faced with capacity challenges at the elementary school level. Depending on future growth, turnover in single-family neighborhoods, and redistricting/capacity changes in existing elementary schools, **the Town may need to consider pursuing and supporting a future submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for an elementary school project.** In Natick, and many other Boston-area suburbs, baby boomers who own homes are looking to downsize or leave the area. As boomers sell, that household that had one or two adults may be replaced by a household with adults and children. In a highly desirable community like Natick with good schools, this turnover in single-family homes can contribute to the growing enrollment. It is important to recognize and acknowledge that not all enrollment growth is the result of new development. Changes in demographics and household composition also have a significant role. As the process for entering into the MSBA queue is known to be cumbersome and time sensitive, the Town should continue to evaluate and prepare for a submission as it becomes clearer which elementary school should be targeted for improvements.



Wilson Middle School



ON-GOING



In addition to capital planning and expenditures for schools, **the School Department should also continue its practice of evaluating school enrollment trends, school capacity, and space needs for students in Natick.** By continuing to collect data on enrollment and student needs, the School Department can stay ahead of capital and operational needs and plan appropriately for funding requests. The School Department and Town should also **continue to support Natick students by hiring additional teachers and administrative support staff as needed.**



ON-GOING



METRIC

ONGOING MONITORING OF ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND SCHOOL CAPACITY IS USED TO PREDICT AND PLAN FOR FUTURE NEEDS.

GOAL 2

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

R2.1

INVEST IN ADDITIONAL DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND SECURITY SYSTEMS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR NATICK RESIDENTS AND STAFF TO DO BUSINESS AND PERFORM WORK TASKS.

LEAD 

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

OTHER DEPARTMENTS THAT CAN UTILIZE ONLINE SYSTEMS FOR PAYMENT OR APPLICATIONS.



ON-GOING



Many communities around the Commonwealth are investing in more sophisticated websites and online digital platforms to make it faster and easier for residents and outside entities to access information and submit payments and applications. While the Town of Natick has made similar efforts, there are some improvements that could be made to increase the number of functions residents could complete online versus in-person or through the mail. Informed by conversations with Town staff, **the Master Plan recommends the Town look department by department to determine if there are additional functions that could be offered online through the Town’s website in addition to in-person and through the mail.** The additional options for online activities can help make Town services more accessible to those who may find it challenging to access staff during regular business hours.

LEAD 

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT
IT DEPARTMENT

ON-GOING



In addition to investing in digital and online platforms to enhance the experience of the general public, the Town should consider digital improvements to help staff efficiencies as well. One recommendation is to **explore the possibility of moving Natick staff to a digital time sheet system to help free up time for department heads who have to monitor and enter data manually for staff.** This digitization of time sheets would help with consistency of data entry, collection of data, and more streamlined analysis of staff hours. Several department heads noted inefficiencies within the current system, where department heads are spending time organizing time sheet information, taking time away from other critical functions more central to the mission of their department.



IMPLEMENTATION OF A DIGITAL TIME SHEET SYSTEM FOR EMPLOYEES.

R2.2

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND RESOURCES TO EXPAND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND SENIOR RESIDENTS.

LEAD 

COUNCIL ON AGING

SUPPORT 

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
METROWEST REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

One of the significant challenges facing Natick and many other communities across the Commonwealth is the growing share of the Town’s population that is over the age of sixty-five. People are living longer and have a strong desire to stay in the community where they have established economic, social, and civic connections. To enable seniors to remain an active part of Natick’s community, transportation access must be addressed. Over time, seniors will give up (by choice or necessity) the ability to drive, which may lead to social isolation and associated mental and physical health issues. It is imperative that seniors have access to transportation to attend programs, go shopping, see friends, or get to medical appointments.

 **4-7 YEARS** 

One of the few options in Natick for senior transportation services is through the Town’s Council on Aging (COA). The COA runs a shuttle for seniors to access appointments, shopping, and the community center. Like many communities, the shuttle service is oversubscribed and underfunded. **The Town should consider increasing funding for the Natick Council on Aging (COA) to provide additional transportation services to seniors and residents with disabilities.**



Natick Community-Senior Center

 **4-7 YEARS** 

Natick also is within the service area of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (RTA), which provides limited fixed-route bus service in town. The Town could discuss route changes, or an expansion of service with the RTA, in conjunction with increased local funding. **The Town should explore a partnership with the MetroWest RTA to bring additional bus service to Natick to ease transportation pressures on the COA.**

 **1-5 YEARS** 

A frequently-raised concern throughout the Master Plan process was transportation access for young adults without access to a car. Many residents expressed concern about these teenagers’ ability to access school, activities, jobs, and after-school social events. The COA vans are not an option for younger riders, and often do not operate in the late afternoon/early evening hours. The RTA buses may not operate at frequent enough headways to be seen as reliable, and may not run routes that adequately serve young adults’ unique needs. **The Town should look to identify longer-term transportation solutions to help get teens from school to relevant spaces like the Teen Center for after-school activities.**

R2.3

EXPAND THE FUNCTIONALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF TOWN-OWNED BUILDINGS, AND PROVIDE STAFF INCREASES WHERE NEEDED.

LEAD



FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

One of the challenges of being an older, more historic community is many buildings and public spaces were designed and built before Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. While upgrades have been made to some Town-owned facilities over time, and all new buildings are designed and built in accordance with ADA and Massachusetts Building Codes, the older buildings still need to be retrofitted to ensure all members of the public have access regardless of ability.

 1-5 YEARS 

 4-7 YEARS 



The Town should **complete a comprehensive accessibility audit of all Town-owned buildings to determine what improvements need to be made.** Once the Town has a handle on the improvements needed, **a phased approach should be taken to integrate improvements into the capital plan over time.**

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADA ACCESSIBILITY PLAN AND INTEGRATION OF FUNDING FOR IMPROVEMENTS INTO CAPITAL PLANS.

 1-5 YEARS 

LEAD 

RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN


One of the ongoing challenges with the Teen Center is its limited short-term funding. **To keep the program sustainable, the Town should look for ways to fund the Teen Center as an ongoing budget item.** This would provide a steady, long-term solution to keeping kids occupied in a safe space after school.

As Natick has grown and evolved as a Town, the demands on facilities and staff have grown and changed as well. This is evidenced first and foremost by the growth in the number of school-aged children and the subsequent demands placed upon Natick’s public schools. Throughout the Master Plan process, however, other public facility and service needs have been made clear. As more and more families are calling Natick home, the demands on the Town’s recreational programming and facilities have increased. Fields, indoor spaces, and programs are highly desired amenities in the community, as are the after school activities provided by the Teen Center. Throughout the Master Plan process, residents of all ages expressed a desire to have the Town **explore the feasibility of expanding the Cole Center over time to accommodate activities as well as a permanent location for a Teen Center.** A reconfiguration and/or expansion would provide much needed space to expand programs and offer teens an area to engage with each other after school.


 7-12+ YEARS 



CREATION OF A SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM FUNDING SOURCE FOR THE TEEN CENTER.

LEAD 

COUNCIL ON AGING

SUPPORT 

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Natick’s seniors are not only looking for improved transportation services, but also more and varied programs to keep them mentally and physically energized on a daily basis. The Natick COA offers a wide variety of programming, and is so popular that it attracts seniors from other communities as well. As the senior population continues to grow in Natick, the Town and COA should look for ways to partner and **increase funding for the Natick COA in order to provide additional programming for seniors.**

 1-5 YEARS 

 1-5 YEARS 

While facilities, services, and programming are critical to meeting the needs of Natick’s residents, it is the Town staff that ensure day-to-day functionality. As such, it is vital that each department is adequately staffed to respond to the needs of the community today and in the future. In the near term, the proposed expansion of the West Natick fire station will provide additional space for much needed emergency service staff and **the Town should work with the Fire Chief to identify staffing levels that meet the changing demands of residents and the built environment.**

LEAD 

FIRE DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE


 **1-5 YEARS** 

GOAL 3

R3.1


LEAD 

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT


SUPPORT 

ALL OTHER DEPARTMENTS

 **ON-GOING** 

LEAD 

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

1-5 YEARS 

1-5 YEARS 

The Public Works Department (DPW) is also understaffed for the number of programs, services, and facilities that it is asked to maintain. The DPW is responsible for a tremendous number of services and facilities including roads, water and sewer, sanitation collection, stormwater, energy, vehicle maintenance, engineering, and more. The staff that maintain the Town’s fields and public spaces is undersized, and as demand continues to grow for recreation programs and use of public spaces the need for additional staff increases. **The Town should work with the DPW Director to identify a satisfactory level of staffing to properly maintain the parks, fields, and public spaces in Natick, and hire for those positions.**

Provide adequate and consistent investment to address the ongoing maintenance of Natick’s public facilities.

ENSURE THE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT HAS THE RESOURCES TO KEEP PUBLIC FACILITIES IN A STATE OF GOOD REPAIR.

Natick staff go through a deliberate process each year to plan for and execute capital projects. These can range from new or improved facilities to vehicle fleet upgrades or infrastructure projects. Based on discussions with Town staff and an evaluation of current capital planning practices, the Town does an excellent job outlining shorter-term needs and expenditures within an approximately five-year time frame. However, **the Town must continue to plan for both short- and long-term capital needs through a transparent and inclusive capital plan process.**

The Facilities Management Department does an excellent job maintaining town-owned buildings across Natick with the resources and staff at hand. That said, there are many buildings in various states of neglect, and more could be done to keep them in good repair. The Town is also in the process of considering a series of substantial school building projects over the next decade which will undoubtedly increase the strain on existing facilities staff. From an administration standpoint, the Facilities Director is currently responsible for management of staff, delegation of duties, processing of requests, and clerical duties. To increase efficiency and productivity, **the Town should consider hiring an Assistant Director to spread some of the responsibilities of running the department across two people.**

In addition to bringing on an Assistant Director in the Facilities Management Department, the Town should also consider hiring additional craftspeople to help with ongoing maintenance related to water and sewer facilities/infrastructure and parks and recreation facilities and fields. Under the current system, DPW and the Facilities Management Department share responsibility for maintaining

different components of these facilities. There is some overlap of responsibility that may not require a full-time facilities craftsman or full-time DPW employee. Instead, these new hires could share time across departments to maximize their time and effectiveness.

A number of trade services such as HVAC, plumbing, and electrical are subcontracted out to private companies to help fill gaps in the Facility Management Department's staffing. Having separate contracts for these services creates additional paperwork and oversight, and can be more costly than hiring a part-time or full-time staff person who can cover these work orders. **Over time, the Town should evaluate the effectiveness of the current service contracts and determine if and when it makes financial sense to hire additional Natick facilities staff.**

LEAD 

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT


7-12+ YEARS 

GOAL 4


Establish a practice of long-term facilities planning that includes identifying future resources needed to address maintenance or construction needs.

R4.1

PROVIDE THE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT WITH THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO ENGAGE IN LONG-TERM CAPITAL PLANNING AND PROACTIVE FACILITIES MAINTENANCE.

LEAD 

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT 

ALL OTHER APPLICABLE DEPARTMENTS

 1-5 YEARS 

As noted previously, departments across Natick Town government do a good job of capital planning for near-term needs and expenditures. There is however a fairly consistent viewpoint within Town government that not enough attention is paid to longer-term facilities maintenance and replacement. This has led to a lack of planning for long-term preventative maintenance where the Facilities Management Department is focused on short-term fixes without a long-term plan. To address this concern, **the Town should hire a consultant to complete an assessment of capital needs of each town-owned facility in Natick.** This would also serve to inventory all building systems and equipment in each town-owned facility. **This could then be turned into a twenty-year facilities plan to better understand the full breadth of need, timing, and budget for maintaining Natick's public facilities.**

This detailed assessment and twenty-year facilities plan would require a more extensive and costly assessment of capital needs than conducted for the Town in the past, but would allow the Town prioritize a long-term capital improvement/replacement plan with associated costs, and budget accordingly.



DEVELOPMENT OF A LONG-TERM CAPITAL PLANNING TOOL AND INTEGRATION INTO THE FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL PLAN.

 **1-5 YEARS** 

LEAD



FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



ALL OTHER APPLICABLE DEPARTMENTS

Once the twenty-year capital planning evaluation and tool are completed, **the Facilities Management Department should work with all other applicable departments to coordinate and input a full inventory of buildings, systems, and equipment, with useful life statistics, into Natick's School Dude® software program.** The School Dude® software provides an existing platform for tracking progress of ongoing maintenance, scheduling upcoming work orders, and re-prioritizing maintenance needs over time.

The current structure of the Facilities Management Department, which is jointly managed by the Town Administrator and the Superintendent of Schools is a concern because it creates potential issues for the Department. Discussions regarding structural changes are underway.



LONG-TERM CAPITAL PLANNING PROGRAMMED INTO SCHOOL DUDE® AND PROGRESS TRACKED.

GOAL 5

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.

R5.1

EVALUATE THE DEMAND FOR AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INCREASING WASTE DISPOSAL SERVICES.

LEAD



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUPPORT



SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR

Natick does an excellent job with sanitary services. The Town not only offers solid waste services, but also recycling programs and composting programs that the Town has tested and implemented. Throughout the Master Plan process, residents expressed desires to expand the frequency of the current recycling program. The Town, led by DPW staff, should **explore the feasibility of implementing a weekly curbside recycling program.** It is worth noting that expanding this program may result in additional capital and staff needs as more trucks may be required to provide this service.


 **4-7 YEARS** 

Along the same lines, the Town has been testing a pilot composting program that has been praised by many residents. There has been higher than expected participation in the program and a desire by many to see the pilot program extended. To help inform a decision on program expansion, the Town should **analyze data from the current composting pilot program and determine the feasibility of implementing a town-wide compost pick-up program.**

 **4-7 YEARS** 

R5.2

LEAD 
SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR

SUPPORT 
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

 **7-12+ YEARS** 

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO INVEST IN NEW GREEN TECHNOLOGY AND SOURCES OF ENERGY TO REDUCE THE TOWN'S CARBON FOOTPRINT.

More and more communities are beginning to swap out components of their diesel or gasoline-powered vehicle fleet by purchasing electric vehicles. Electric vehicles are more fuel efficient, cost less to power, and are better for the environment. As the Town is looking to procure new or additional vehicles over time, **it should evaluate investments in electric power for smaller-engine town vehicles, with a goal of eventually shifting the Town's entire fleet from fossil fuels to electric.** This may require thinking through charging stations or plug systems around Natick, as well as at overnight vehicle storage locations, but these apparatus take up less room than most municipal fueling stations.

A non-binding Renewable Natick Resolution for 100% renewal energy was passed at the 2018 Fall Annual Town Meeting.






Parking lots and roofs are solar opportunities waiting to be embraced. Natick has already started down this path by exploring solar canopies over municipal parking lots. This can be an excellent source of inexpensive energy that can be used by the Town or sold back to energy companies at a premium. **The Town should continue to explore the feasibility of installing solar canopies over municipal lots** with the idea of turning more unused space into solar power-producing assets.












 **7-12+ YEARS** 















INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF SOLAR ENERGY GENERATED FOR THE TOWN.

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Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
<p>Goal 1: Maintain high quality educational facilities and access to an excellent education for children in Natick.</p>	<p>R1.1: Invest in facilities and staff to ensure Natick's education system continues to thrive.</p>	<p>Continue Town support for the Kennedy Middle School building project, which will provide added capacity for Natick student enrollment.</p> 	<p>Natick School Department</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen Finance Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>Consider pursuing and supporting a future submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for an elementary school project.</p>	<p>Natick School Department</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen Finance Committee</p>	<p>1-5 YEARS</p>		
		<p>The School Department should continue its practice of evaluating school enrollment trends, school capacity, and space needs for students in Natick.</p> 	<p>Natick School Department</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of enrollment trends and school capacity is used to predict and plan for future needs.</p>	
		<p>Continue to support Natick students by hiring additional teachers and administrative support staff as needed.</p> 	<p>Natick School Department</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of enrollment trends and school capacity is used to predict and plan for future needs.</p>	
<p>Goal 2: As Natick's population changes, invest in facilities and staff that will provide services to meet residents' needs.</p>	<p>R2.1: Invest in additional digital platforms and security systems to make it easier for Natick residents and staff to do business and perform work tasks.</p>	<p>Determine if there are additional functions that could be offered online through the Town's website in addition to in-person and through the mail.</p> 	<p>Finance Department</p>	<p>Other departments that can utilize online systems for payment or applications</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>		
		<p>Explore the possibility of moving Natick staff to a digital time sheet system to help free up time for department heads who have to monitor and enter data manually for staff.</p>	<p>Finance Department</p>	<p>Human Resources Department IT Department</p>	<p>ON-GOING</p>	<p>Implementation of a digital time sheet system for employees.</p>	

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
							
	R2.2: Provide additional funding and resources to expand transportation services for youth and senior residents.	Consider increasing funding for the Natick Council on Aging (COA) to provide additional transportation services to seniors and residents with disabilities. 	Council on Aging	Transportation Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	4-7 YEARS		Transportation
		Explore a partnership with MetroWest RTA to bring additional bus service to Natick to ease transportation pressures on the COA. 	Council on Aging	Transportation Advisory Committee Board of Selectmen Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	4-7 YEARS		Transportation
		Identify longer-term transportation solutions to help get teens from school to relevant spaces like the Teen Center for after-school activities. 	Community Services Department	Transportation Advisory Committee Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	1-5 YEARS		Transportation
	R2.3: Expand the functionality and accessibility of town-owned buildings, and provide staff increases where needed.	Complete a comprehensive accessibility audit of all town-owned buildings to determine what improvements need to be made. Subsequently, a phased approach should be taken to integrate improvements into the capital plan over time. 	Facilities Management Department		4-7 YEARS	Development of an ADA accessibility plan and integrate funding for improvements into capital plans.	
		Determine methods to fund the Teen Center as an ongoing budget item. 	Community Services Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
		Explore the feasibility of expanding the Cole Center over time to accommodate activities as well as a permanent location for a Teen Center. 	Community Services Department	Facilities Management Department Board of Selectmen	7-12+ YEARS	Creation of a sustainable, long-term funding source for the Teen Center.	Open Space & Recreation
		Increase funding for the Natick COA in order to provide additional programming for seniors. 	Council on Aging	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Work with the Fire Chief to identify staffing levels that meet the changing demands of residents and the built environment. 	Fire Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Work with the DPW Director to identify a satisfactory level of staffing to properly maintain the parks, fields, and public spaces in Natick, and hire for those positions. 	Public Works Department	Board of Selectmen Finance Committee	1-5 YEARS		Open Space & Recreation
Goal 3: Provide adequate and consistent investment to address the ongoing maintenance of Natick's public facilities.	R3.1: Ensure that the Facilities Management Department has the resources to keep public facilities in a state of good repair.	Continue to plan for both short- and long-term capital needs through a transparent and inclusive capital planning process. 	Facilities Management Department	All other Town departments	ON-GOING		All Elements 
		Consider hiring an Assistant Director to spread some of the responsibilities of running the Facilities Management Department across two people.	Facilities Management Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Consider hiring additional craftspeople to help with ongoing maintenance related to water and sewer facilities/ infrastructure and parks and recreation facilities and fields.	Facilities Management Department	Board of Selectmen	1-5 YEARS		
		Evaluate the effectiveness of current service contracts and determine if and when it makes financial sense to hire additional Natick facilities staff.	Facilities Management Department	Human Resources Department	7-12+ YEARS		
Goal 4: Establish a practice of long-term facilities planning that includes identifying future resources needed to address maintenance or construction needs.	R4.1: Provide the Facilities Management Department with the resources needed to engage in long-term capital planning and proactive facilities maintenance. 	Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of capital needs of each town-owned facility in Natick.	Facilities Management Department	All other applicable departments	1-5 YEARS		

Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
		Develop a twenty-year facilities plan to better understand the full breadth of need, timing, and budget for maintaining Natick's public facilities. 	Facilities Management Department	All other applicable departments	1-5 YEARS	Development of a long-term capital planning tool and integration into the five-year capital plan.	
		The Facilities Management Department should work with all other applicable departments to coordinate and input a full inventory of buildings, systems, and equipment, with useful life statistics, into Natick's School Dude software program. 	Facilities Management Department	All other applicable departments	1-5 YEARS	Long-term capital planning is programmed into School Dude platform and progress is being tracked.	
Goal 5: 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.	R5.1: Evaluate the demand for and effectiveness of increasing waste disposal services.	Explore the feasibility of implementing a weekly curbside recycling program. 	Public Works Department	Sustainability Coordinator	4-7 YEARS		
		Analyze data from the current composting pilot program and determine the feasibility of implementing a town-wide compost pick-up program.	Public Works Department	Sustainability Coordinator	4-7 YEARS		
	R5.2: Identify opportunities to invest in new green technology and sources of energy to reduce the Town's carbon footprint.	Evaluate investments in electric power for smaller-engine town vehicles, with a goal of eventually shifting the town's entire fleet from fossil fuels to electric. 	Sustainability Coordinator	Public Works Department	7-12+ YEARS		
		Continue to explore the feasibility of installing solar canopies over municipal lots. 	Sustainability Coordinator	Public Works Department	7-12+ YEARS	Increase in the amount of solar energy generated for the Town.	


9. Implementation

Implementation of a Master Plan is an on-going, long-term process requiring significant efforts and cooperation of multiple parties. The preceding chapters, together with the following matrix, identify recommendations and action steps, along with the responsible party, support parties, the time frame for implementation, metrics for tracking progress and identification of other master plan elements with which the action should be coordinated.

While The Plan identifies an entity (or entities) with the lead responsibility for each action item, implementation will require collaboration and coordination between that entity and the Board of Selectmen, Town Administration and/or Town departments who have the statutory and charter authority to officially adopt and implement the action items.



Goal	Recommendation	Action Step	Lead Responsibility	Support Responsibility	Time Frame	Metric	Coordination
Provide for a mix of housing options at a variety of price points.	Increase opportunities for multi-family and mixed-use development in appropriate locations.	Critically review the zoning in the parts of town where multi-family and mixed-use development are likely to be supported politically and financially. Site higher intensity development in specific locations where impacts to existing single-family neighborhoods will be minimal.	Planning Board Community and Economic Development Department	Zoning Board of Appeals Affordable Housing Trust Board Economic Development Committee	4-7 YEARS		Land Use
	Support the redevelopment of properties in Natick Center by allowing and encouraging mixed-use and multi-family housing that provides housing options and brings more people to downtown to support local businesses.	Consider updating the existing base zoning district(s) covering Natick Center to allow more by-right integration of housing as a permitted use.	Planning Board Community and Economic Development Department	Economic Development Committee	ON-GOING		Land Use
	Increase the stock of affordable housing.	Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning bylaw with the following considerations at a minimum: A minimum set-aside for affordable units A threshold for number of units that would trigger inclusionary zoning Allow for payments in lieu of units or off-site units Area Median Income thresholds for affordable units	Planning Board Community and Economic Development Department	Affordable Housing Trust Board	1-5 YEARS	Adoption of an inclusionary zoning bylaw.	Land Use

Sample Implementation Matrix


LEAD 
 PLANNING BOARD
 BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Critical to achieving the goals of the Master Plan is ensuring that implementation moves forward at a reasonable pace so that momentum and determination from the Master Plan process is not lost. It will be important to institute an ongoing mechanism for tracking implementation that allows everyone involved to see what is (and isn't) being implemented. That mechanism can take several different forms, and Natick needs to ensure that it employs one that works with the Town organizational structure. For example, the two components outlined on the following page can be requested annually by the Board of Selectmen or Planning Board or Town Administrator, or can be mandated by a new Town by-law.

It is recommended that the mechanism include two components:

- ON-GOING**  + **Annual reporting by all departments on the status of implementation. The report could be included in the Town's Annual Report or made public in some other format.**
- ON-GOING**  + **An annual meeting, initiated by the Planning Board, of representatives of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Planning Board and Department heads to discuss the status of implementation, required coordination and any roadblocks that have been encountered.**

Master Plans are designed to be "living documents." While there is an attempt to be forward thinking, it is not always possible to foresee future conditions – many factors related to the economy (and therefore land use, traffic, and tax revenues), technology and demographics are outside of the control of the Town. Goals may also become obsolete or slightly modified. It has been assumed from the outset that this Master Plan will need to be updated on a regular basis to account for those and other changing factors. **It is recommended that the plan be updated on a five-year basis.** At that time, changing conditions may result in specific recommendations being no longer necessary, becoming more critical, or needing to be updated in terms of the action steps suggested in The Plan. These five year updates will allow the Master Plan to remain relevant over a much longer period of time.

- ON-GOING**  **While the Town administration and legislators - through the Board of Selectmen, Department Heads and Town Meeting - will oversee the implementation, it could be helpful to have an entity that "champions" the plan. This entity should be actively engaged in monitoring progress and in encouraging identified responsible parties to move forward with implementation tasks. A committee similar to the existing Master Plan Advisory Committee could be appointed as the Master Plan Implementation Committee.**

