

Needham 2025 Proposed Scope of Work

The goal of the N25 project is to gain a better understanding of the impact of commercial and residential growth on the Town's infrastructure, including but not limited to: traffic, transportation, water, sewer, drains, roads and bridges, technology, and school facilities; and to identify options for managing that impact.

Over the years, the Town has conducted facility master plans, demographic analyses for future school needs planning, and build-out analyses for special projects and zoning initiatives. The N25 project will provide a more complete Town-wide overview – identifying the reasonably anticipated range of commercial and residential growth by 2025, and the associated impact/pressure that may be placed on existing, planned, or prospective infrastructure by this growth and other regional trends.

The review will identify the improvements made to Town infrastructure over the past ten years, and planned capital investment (such as the Mitchell School, the Pollard School, the School Administration Building, and the DPW Complex).

Expert advice will be sought to identify gaps that may exist in our existing and planned infrastructure investment because of reasonably anticipated commercial and residential growth.

Population

Questions for Consultants

- What population figure for the Town of Needham is relevant for this planning effort?
- What is the projected population estimate based on known development?
- What population trends should the Town be concerned about?
- What will be the impact of population growth on capital facilities and horizontal infrastructure including water, sewer, roads, and utilities? What will be the impact on traffic and parking?

Housing Development

Questions for Town Discussion

- Is there a target population that the Town would like to achieve/maintain?
- If residential housing development is desired, where should it occur?

Questions for Consultants

- What amount of residential housing development will trigger the need for new/upgraded infrastructure?
- Is it possible to create housing for people who would like to downsize in Needham?
- How can the Town create housing for this niche without hitting the tipping point for a new school?

- What parcels exist that could be consolidated or redeveloped by developers that would create a significant increase in the number of housing units in the Town?
- What must the Town do in order to maintain its 10% threshold of affordable housing?
- What would be the impact of allowing accessory dwelling units?

Economic Development

Questions for Town Discussion

- What will be the impact on the sense of community of increased commercial development?
- What level of the tax levy is the target for commercial value? Is the 20% historic target appropriate and/or realistic?
- How can the Town shift more of the tax base back toward the commercial sector?

Questions for Consultants

- What is the impact of commercial development that is in place or permitted?
- How can the Town incent new and desirable construction?
- What transportation options are available to incent commercial development?
- In what sector is commercial growth occurring?
- How does the Town of Needham make itself attractive in that market?
- The goal of the Needham Crossing up-zoning was to develop 2.5 million s.f. of new commercial space. How will that be achieved? Is it achievable? What will be the impact on infrastructure if this build-out occurs?

Enrollment/Demographics

Questions for Consultants

- What are the enrollment trends?
- How will planned development impact those trends?
- What demographic trends will impact enrollment?
- What is the impact of housing stock turnover on enrollment?

School Infrastructure

Questions for Town Discussion

- Are there any reasonable options for accommodating significant enrollment growth at the secondary level?
- What implication does the MSBA process and timeline have on the proposed construction/reconstruction of new schools?

Questions for Consultants

- What amount of new residential development and/or housing stock turnover will necessitate the construction of new or increased capacity of existing school buildings?
- What would be the impact of a downturn in the economy on school age children returning to public school from private school?

- What does the data reveal about prior downturns?
- What is the tipping point for the need for a new school(s)?

The Wider Community

- Are the types of questions Needham is asking indicative of the situation in other communities?
- What has been the experience in other towns?

Municipal Finance

- The Town has had an extraordinary period of revenue growth that will eventually end.
- The proposed debt to revenue peaking at or around 12% should be a caution sign.
- What will be the impact of ecommerce and the growth of the sharing economy (e.g. autonomous vehicles) on municipal revenue, infrastructure and the built environment?