

Phase IV: Building the Plan

The purpose of this chapter is to review and describe Phase IV of the master planning process – building the plan. This includes steps 4 and 5 of the master planning process. The aim of this phase of the planning process is: (1) to evaluate the future development scenarios formulated in Phase III; (2) to select a preferred future development scheme (which becomes the future land use map); and (3) to prepare and adopt the plan.

Step 4: Evaluating Future Development Scenarios

Leading up to this point, you have successfully prepared (1) a set of vision statements, goals, and objectives, which set forth the central themes and guiding principles of your plan; (2) a community assessment of the past, current, and future characteristics of your community, specifying how and why your community is anticipated to grow in the future; and (3) a number of possible development scenarios, suggesting how and where your community may grow in the future.

The next step in the planning process is to evaluate those scenarios – to examine your community’s framework of open space, the pattern of existing land uses, the location of community facilities and services, and the amount and type of growth anticipated or desired. Within the opportunities and limitations, alternative patterns and policies for future growth can be considered.

One way to successfully evaluate such patterns is to compare the advantages and disadvantages of each



*Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day.
Teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest
of his life.*

- Chinese proverb

scenario. During this process, frequent reference should be made to your community’s vision statements and to the development and opportunities map prepared under Phase III of the planning process. The evaluation process should take into account all relevant factors including topography, soil, slope, water resources, the availability of services, existing land uses, and other special features. The realistic land use needs of your community and citizen preferences should also be considered.

The aim of each development scenario is to identify potential growth areas. These areas may be centered around villages in the rural parts of the community or provide for the expansion of existing developed areas. Remember: growth is preferable in those locations where community facilities and services presently exist or where such services can be readily provided; and, conversely, growth is less desirable if the facilities and services necessary to sustain it are not available or cannot be readily provided. Your planning board should be prepared to evaluate various locations within the community for potential growth and then address conflicting opinions and priorities about those areas.

The areas designated as preferred for growth will likely represent a desired development pattern for your community. This pattern forms the basis of your future land use map. The future land use map can also be filled in by identifying future residential, commercial, and industrial areas. The identification of areas for particular future uses should take into account compatibility with existing land uses.

When your board has selected future growth areas and land uses, it has completed the mapping phase of the master plan. The board should then begin to develop the policies and criteria needed to govern the use of the areas designated as “preferred for open space” and “preferred for growth.” The map and accompanying policies or guidelines together constitute the land use plan. As your community begins to discuss and evaluate future development scenarios, it should consider holding at least one public informational meeting, or a series of them, to display and present the preferred growth areas and policies.

Another helpful tool, which can be used to evaluate future development scenarios, is a build-out analysis. This analysis can be used to project what your community will be like 10 to 20 years from now, if present trends are allowed to continue. It can be used to identify all the vacant buildable land in your community if present rates of development continue and present lot size requirements remain in effect. It can also be used to determine how many more housing units could be built and what your community’s future population might be at full build-out.

A build-out analysis is an important and useful tool for medium-sized communities that have been growing rapidly, where the amount of available buildable land has been diminishing, and where there is concern that changes are needed in local land use regulations. On the other hand, if your community has remained relatively stable or has experienced slow growth, if there are large amounts of vacant buildable land still available and the planning board feels confident that additional growth can be adequately accommodated, it may not be necessary to conduct a build-out analysis. The only advantage of conducting a build-out analysis under such conditions is that it presents the community with a “worst-case” development scenario. It paints a picture of what could happen if no action is taken and no changes are made in local land use regulations. In that sense, it could serve as a wake-up call for citizens and community leaders to understand the need for planning as a means to shape future growth and development. The worst-case scenario serves as the ultimate reference point against which all other development scenarios can be compared.

Information about how to conduct a build-out analysis is presented in Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques.”

Step 5: Selecting the Preferred Development Scheme (Future Land Use Map)/Preparing and Adopting the Plan

Preparing the Future Land Use Map

Ideally you should prepare all the major sections of your plan before you begin the process of developing your future land use map. The future land use map represents a blueprint for future growth, and reflects both existing patterns of land use and the desired use of land. It also predicts the future demand for land, based on past trends and future projections. In short, it is a prescription for planned growth, as well as a land use guide.

1. Consistency

In order for your master plan to be effective, the official zoning map and land use regulations of your community must be consistent with the future land use map, as well as the land use visions and goals of your master plan. In addition, the different zones shown on your zoning map should be consistent with the land use categories shown on the future land use map.

2. Change

The future land use map should also give direction to the planning board in its review of development proposals. The land use chapter should include recommendations for amendments or changes to your community's zoning ordinance and zoning map, as necessary, to ensure consistency with the master plan. Again, future changes in zoning or subdivision policies should be based on the land use categories shown on the future land use map.

3. Land Use Categories

Generally land use categories will be broader and less defined for large communities. The function of this is primarily to avoid designating specific parcels of land for specific uses. However, more specific land use categories are needed for small communities. In small communities, the land areas desired for future residential use include both land use and density. As a result, the future land use map should differentiate between traditional single-family, multi-family, and, perhaps, manufactured homes. The map should also indicate the difference between light or moderate industry. Commercial activities also have a wide range of use intensities. There is a big difference between a neighborhood retail area and a shopping center.

Regional land use maps tend to show large, generalized areas where residential, commercial, and industrial uses may be acceptable. These maps commonly include a good deal of resource data (floodplains, prime farmlands, sensitive environmental areas) that show where development should generally be avoid-

ed. The following land use categories can be used as examples to complete your future land use map. It is important to point out that the categories you use should agree with your community's preferred development scheme and with the vision statements and land use principles of your master plan.

4. Land Use Categories for Large Cities and Towns

If your master plan utilizes an urban growth area boundary concept to promote cost efficiencies in the provision of urban services such as water and sewer, you can delineate an urban growth area (divided into a primary growth area and a secondary growth area) and a rural area (for more information about this concept, see Chapter 11, "Planning Concepts and Themes"). These broad categories would allow your community to guide growth and development first to those areas where existing services are available, and then to those areas where the expansion of those services would be the most cost-effective for the community.

Urban Growth Area – that portion of your town or city that can be expected to develop at an urban level of density over a specified number of years. The urban growth area would include both primary and secondary growth areas.

Primary Growth Area – that portion of the urban growth area where urban-level services and facilities are already in place or can be provided at the least cost. This is the area where near-term growth and development is to be especially encouraged.

Secondary Growth Area – that portion of the urban growth area where urban-level services can be provided, but on a lower priority basis than in the primary growth area. In other words, costs for the provision of services would be more expensive than in the primary growth area.

Rural Area – that portion of the municipality that is influenced by urban growth forces, but within which urban-level development should be discouraged for a specified time period, due to the lack of, or prohibitive cost to provide, urban-level services.

This framework offers a large town or city a generalized strategic growth plan to guide future development; to apply it, it is first necessary to define what constitutes urban-level services and urban-level development within your community.

Another generalized approach is to identify broad areas as preferred residential, non-residential, and conservation.

Preferred Residential – consists of areas in which both single-family and multi-family housing are recommended. There is no concern about density or mixing residential land uses under this approach.

Non-Residential – consists of areas where residential development is not desired except for some infill development of existing lots. This category includes all commercial, industrial, and other non-residential uses. Again, there would be no concern about mixing these uses.

Conservation – includes areas where constraints such as steep slopes and wetlands exist. This category is designed to promote the protection of natural resources and guide development away from natural hazards. It could also be used to protect uses found in your community's rural zoning districts, to prevent, for example, putting a chemical plant next to a private school.

A similar approach is simply to designate areas of **existing development**, including residential, commercial, and industrial – and then designate areas of **future development**. This is a common approach if your community is hesitant to designate specific land use categories on your future land use map.

5. Land Use Categories for Small Cities and Towns

For many small towns and cities, it might be more effective to utilize traditional categories such as the following:

Resource Protection or Conservation – includes those lands used for forestry, mineral extraction, or agriculture, requiring special conservation measures. This category should also include those land areas identified on

your map of environmentally sensitive areas.

Open Space/Recreation – includes land areas already identified as public or municipally-owned lands, town forests, privately owned conservation easements, and public recreational areas and facilities. Most of these areas have already been mapped as part of your basic natural resource inventory.

Rural Residential – consists of existing and proposed single-family residential uses on two or more acres of land. You should be able to cross-reference this category with your zoning districts.

Low-Density Residential – includes all existing and proposed single-family housing, generally on lots of 1 to 2 acres in size. This category should be reflected in your existing zoning districts.

Medium-Density Residential – generally includes all existing and proposed housing lots of 1/2 to 1 acre in size. You should be able to cross-reference this category with your existing zoning districts and include a maximum density.

High-Density Residential – consists of all existing and proposed multi-family developments greater than three units per dwelling. This category should be reflected in your existing zoning districts and include a maximum density.

Manufactured Housing – consists of all existing and proposed mobile home parks and manufactured housing lots.

General Office/Commercial – includes all existing and desired commercial areas generally located downtown or around the immediate downtown area.

Highway Commercial – includes all existing and desired commercial areas located immediately adjacent to existing streets and highways. These areas can also occur as nodes around existing and proposed new intersections.

Downtown or Village/Mixed Use – generally incorporates much of the current town center and areas proposed for expansion.

Industrial – includes all existing industrial areas, industrial parks, and desired future industrial areas.

Community Facilities – includes all existing facilities such as town-owned buildings, schools, and proposed new facilities.

As with most land use classifications, the range of uses can be quite variable. The categories used for the master plan should be designed to reflect your community's local characteristics. In addition, they should tie together all of the chapters and land use principles of your master plan to give an overall picture of your community now and in the future. The creation of the future land use map should be one of the last tasks completed in the development of your master plan.

Future Demand for Land

There is another important aspect to preparing your future land use map. The data and projections prepared as part of your community assessment and studies of population, economic activity, and housing should be closely examined to estimate the future need for land over the planning horizon of your master plan. This is a difficult task even for professional planners. For most master plans, the future demand for housing and public facilities is usually based on past trends and population projections. If you have prepared population and dwelling-units projections, as recommended for the community assessment, the next step is to translate those estimates into land requirements for future building purposes.

A simple approach is to assume that a house, along with the necessary easements and rights-of-way, will require approximately one-half an acre. Be aware that the average amount of land required for one new dwelling unit can vary tremendously. The national trend is toward smaller lots, fewer easements, and narrower streets, although this trend has not significantly affected most rural areas. Lot prices and land preparation costs are considerably lower in rural areas than in urban areas. Lack of public water and sewer, and even the perceived need for more space, means that rural housing lots frequently begin at two units per acre and range to upwards of four or five acres per unit.

Even rapidly growing suburban communities that were once small towns allow some subdivisions to develop without public sewers. A reasonable assumption for the minimum space required to treat sewage on an individual lot is one acre per house. It is important, however, that you check with local and state officials regarding the minimum lot sizes required for on-site sewage treatment. A minimum of two acres is even better, given the likelihood of having to move a leach field sometime during the life of the septic system. Also, if an on-site well is used to provide water, the greater the distance between the well and the septic tank system, the better.

Land required for public spaces such as parks and recreation, governmental institutions, schools, or the expansion of public facilities (including solid waste facilities and transfer stations) should be added to the total demand for land. The best sources for most of this information are your local public officials and the local engineers or consulting engineers who design and plan public facilities. School district officials, using national and state standards, will be able to supply estimates of the total land needed for future school additions and improvements. Statewide standards can also be obtained from the 2003 SCORP and 1995 Guide to Municipal Recreation from NH OEP, which are available online at <http://nh.gov/oep/resources.htm>. National recreation standards are available from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) at <http://nrpa.org/store/>.

Estimating the future demand for commercial and industrial land is somewhat more difficult. Towns located near large cities have a definite advantage in this regard; employment forecasts and market expansion estimates are commonly available and are reasonable indicators of future land requirements. Most small communities and rural areas exhibit a rather slow change and low demand for new commercial space. Towns with moderate growth rates (2% to 3% average annualized rates of growth) can sometimes estimate future demand for commercial space by finding the ratio between total population change and new commercial square footage over the past 5 to 10 years.

Ultimately, it will be necessary to use a common-sense approach when making such estimates. Some common-sense methods for estimating future commercial and office space are provided below. It is important to remember that estimates must include total space, not just the building area; they must factor in, for example, parking space and remaining open space within individual lots.

Example 1: Estimate in square feet the current amount of space used by commercial businesses and offices within your community. Find the ratio of the current population to the current square footage – in other words, the square footage per person. Assume that the need for new space per person will increase at the same rate throughout your planning time period. If the current ratio is, for example, 480 square feet per person, and the total expected number of additional people by the year 2020 is 840, then the need for new commercial space is estimated to be 840×480 , or approximately 403,200 square feet.

Example 2: Estimate the amount of new commercial space built or converted outside the central business district of your community during the past twenty years. Assume that approximately half the same amount of space must be made available over the next ten years.

Example 3: Ask the experts, the people who operate the businesses within your community. Use your local chamber of commerce or similar organizations, or survey all the businesses in your community about plans for expansion within the next 5 to 10 years.

Example 4: If your community has accurate building permit records, you can construct a trend line or a bar chart showing the amount of new commercial space added over the past two decades.

In a typical small town, between 15 to 18 percent of all the land (including the structures and the lots) is used for commercial purposes. This formula may serve as a benchmark for the unexceptional, isolated, stable small town with a population base of approximately 2,500 persons. The problem is that small towns exhibit wide variations in their actual uses of commercial space. Many small communities serve as trade areas for large regional markets and need large

amounts of commercial and professional space. On the other hand, many other small rural communities have low-density housing patterns and traditional village design, with a small ratio of commercial use to total town area. This is especially true if the community is not located on a major highway.

You can also estimate the demand for industrial land, using the current ratio of population to industrial acreage, to project future needs as the population increases. If your community does not have an area or industrial park set aside to both attract and provide for industrial relocation and expansion of industrial operations, it will be difficult to encourage this type of development. Industrial firms are not willing to relocate or expand unless a community can provide accessible, reasonably-priced land with public water and sewer. Planning for industrial development requires a long-range vision. Once investments are made and land is assembled, there is very little opportunity for change. In most master plans, a minimum of forty contiguous acres should be designated for industrial expansion. Keep in mind

- Ease of access is crucial; lack of accessibility is fatal.
- Infrastructure (roads, sewer, and water) and public services are vital to the long-term success of an industrial area.
- New firms in small communities thrive on low-cost buildings and cheap preparation; a site that requires even a moderate amount of preparation may pose an obstacle.
- You can seek help at the regional and state levels; it is also helpful to visit other communities that have industrial parks.

There is no one best way to estimate the demand for future industrial lands. Again, ask the experts. A good master plan lets investors know where development is desired within the community.

Preparing the Plan

At this point in the process, the preparation of your master plan should be straight-forward. You have already completed the community assessment and collected the data and information to be included in the plan. Vision statements have been developed. A

Master Plan Elements	Year						Year					
	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
Community survey												
Community visioning												
Community goals												
GIS mapping												
Demographic trends												
Existing land use												
Introduction												
Regional concerns												
Community facilities												
Transportation												
Housing												
Economic development												
Historical and cultural resources												
Future land use												
DRAFT PLAN												
Public hearing(s)												
Adoption												
Publishing/Printing												

number of future growth scenarios and a preferred development scheme have been selected. The existing and future land use maps have been prepared, and, most importantly, the chapters of your plan have been selected as provided by RSA 674:2 (see Chapter 3, “What Should Be Included in Your Master Plan”). In addition, you have selected an approach and the type of master plan to prepare for the community (see Chapter 9, “Basics of Planning Theory”). You should now be ready to complete your sections and finalize your plan.

If time is an issue, you may need to streamline your approach and focus your energy on the most important aspects of your plan. If you are planning to complete your master plan within a one-year timeframe, which is generally recommended, it would be wise to complete one section or chapter of your master plan every month until your entire plan is com-

pleted. A sample master plan project timeline is provided above. For most municipalities, the timeline begins with the start of a new fiscal year.

Getting the Plan Adopted

This is a critical moment in any master planning process. At this point in the process, thousands of dollars have been spent. Many volunteers, board members, the public, staff, and elected officials have dedicated a significant amount of time and energy to a project that is now almost complete. All of this hard work could go for naught if either the planning board or the governing body of your community fails to adopt the plan. How do you go about minimizing that possibility? What procedures can you follow to get your plan adopted?

The Planning Board

A master plan may be adopted by the planning board in accordance with RSA 674:4, as stated below:

RSA 674:4 Master Plan Adoption and Amendment.

The Planning Board may, according to the procedures required under RSA 675:6, adopt the master plan as a whole, or may adopt successive sections or parts of the plan. Sections or parts of the plan shall correspond with major geographical sections or divisions of the municipality, or with the functional elements of the plan, and may incorporate any amendment, extension, or addition to the plan.

A planning board may adopt a master plan as a whole document at one time, or it may adopt separate but successive parts of the plan (such as the vision and the land use sections). While it is not mandatory that a master plan be adopted by the planning board once it is completed, it is fair to say that no planning board wants to see a master plan come before it that it cannot adopt. At this point in the process, too many people, including the board, have a stake in the success of the plan.

The Governing Body

There is currently no state requirement that a master plan be considered for adoption or adopted by the local governing body. However, for your plan to be successful, it may be helpful if the governing body adopts it. If adoption is not possible, their approval or acceptance of the plan, at least, can be sought.

There are key differences between the words “adoption,” “approval,” and “acceptance.” These differences should be kept in mind when the plan is presented to your governing body for their review. The words “adoption” and “approval” are very similar. Both imply a formal means of acceptance. However, the word “adoption” carries with it a more official conviction toward action. “Acceptance,” on the other hand, does not carry as strong a message. It signifies mere acknowledgement, rather than wholehearted support.

To obtain the governing body’s support of the master plan, it is recommended that the planning board consider the following strategies.

1. Maintain Open Lines of Communication

Master plans can be rejected by governing bodies for many reasons. Unfortunately, lack of communication between the planning board and the governing body, especially when the plan is being prepared, is a primary reason plans are ignored or set aside. The planning board can avoid this by opening up lines of communication with the board of selectmen or city council. A selectman or city councilor serving as a voting member of the planning board should be able to fill this role.

It would be wise to invite members of the governing body to share their perspectives and visions early in the development of the master plan. Likewise, the planning board should share with the governing body how the plan will be developed, what its contents will include, and why it will be of value to the community. Time spent educating the governing body about the planning process will yield dividends during plan adoption.

2. Share Your Work Plan

The planning board should share its work plan and timeline with the governing body before proceeding to begin work on the master plan. This information will help provide elected officials with a clear picture of how the master plan will be assembled and by what time different parts of the plan will be completed. Everyone on the governing body should be made aware of the master plan as early on in the process as possible.

3. Involve and Inform the Governing Body

The planning board should involve the governing body at all stages of the plan development process. For example, the governing body should be invited to serve on a master plan advisory committee or participate in the community visioning process. They should also be invited to attend all community meetings and public forums held during the planning process. As milestones are reached, written and oral status reports should be given to the governing body. These efforts will help to build and maintain lines of communication between the governing body and the planning board.

4. Schedule Joint Work Sessions

During the development of the master plan, the planning board and the governing body should consider meeting in formal work sessions to discuss various elements and phases of the plan.

5. Hold Joint Public Hearings

It may be useful to hold joint public hearings on the draft plan before the planning board takes formal action. This is a common procedure when an applicant seeks a local permit and petitions two or more land use boards to hold a joint public hearing, the matter of the requested permit falling within the responsibilities of both boards (see RSA 676:2). There is nothing in the state statutes that prevents a joint public hearing of the planning board and the governing body. In fact, holding joint public hearings may help to reduce the number of separate public hearings held by both boards. The premise behind this strategy is that support for the plan may be easier to secure if both bodies are willing to interact with the public together.

6. Schedule Separate Hearings

If joint public hearings are not possible, it may be helpful to schedule a public hearing before the governing body on the final draft plan before the planning board takes formal action. With this approach, the planning board holds its public hearing(s) on the draft plan, and then votes to forward the final draft plan to the governing body for a final public hearing. The governing body holds the final public hearing, votes to adopt or accept the plan, and forwards it back to the planning board for adoption.

In short, no matter which approach is followed, the key word when considering any plan adoption strategy is communication. Designing a strategy that places a premium on communicating with the governing body will substantially enhance the likelihood that your master plan will be successfully adopted and implemented.

Procedural Requirements

The minimum procedural requirements for adoption of a master plan are provided in RSA 675:6, as described below:

RSA 675:6 Method of Adoption. Every local master plan, subdivision regulation, site plan review regulation, and historic district regulation referred to in this title shall be adopted or amended by the planning board or historic district commission, as appropriate, in the following manner:

- I. The board or commission, as appropriate, shall hold a public hearing prior to adoption or amendment. Notice for the time and place of the hearing shall be as provided in RSA 675:7.
- II. The board or commission, as appropriate, may adopt or amend the master plan or regulation upon completion of the public hearing by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members.
- III. No master plan, regulation, amendment, or exception adopted under this section shall be legal or have any force and effect until copies of it are certified by a majority of the board or commission and filed with the city clerk, town clerk, or clerk for the county commissioners.

It often takes several public hearings before the planning board can adopt a master plan. Revisions to the draft plan are typically made after the required public hearing(s). When the draft plan is accepted by the board, it is presented to the governing body for adoption. Often the vote to adopt occurs at a separate meeting following the public hearing. However, this vote can occur immediately upon completion of a public hearing if everything goes smoothly and there is strong support for the plan. Adoption of the master plan, as mandated by state law, requires an affirmative vote of a majority of the planning board.

Public Hearing Notice Requirements

The notice requirements for advertising public hearings on your master plan are provided in RSA 675:7:

RSA 675:7 Notice Requirements for Public Hearing.

I. Notice shall be given for the time and place of each public hearing held under RSA 675:2-4 and RSA 675:6 at least 10 days before the hearing. The notice required under this section shall not include the day notice is posted or the day of the public hearing. Notice of each public hearing shall be published in a paper of general circulation in the municipality and shall be posted in at least 2 public places.

II. The full text of the proposed master plan, zoning ordinance, building code, subdivision regulation, site plan review regulation and historic district regulation, ordinance, or amendment need not be included in the notice if an adequate statement describing the proposal and designating the place where the proposal is on file for public inspection is stated in the notice.

Publishing an advertisement in your local newspaper and posting it in at least two public places are only

the minimum requirements. You can also utilize your local cable access channel and your community's web page and place posters in heavily traveled locations such as the library, city or town hall, recreational centers, and local stores and businesses. Some communities mail out notices and special invitations to all local households and businesses. If your community only has a few thousand residents, it is not too expensive to print and mail post cards or letter-size notices at bulk mail rates. Your town should be able to print mailing labels for all the property owners in your community, based on the town's tax assessing records.

Official Resolution

A master plan cannot be adopted as an ordinance of law because it is not a regulation. However, it is standard practice that master plans be adopted by means of an official resolution of the municipality. Once the resolution has been signed and dated, it is included in the final publication of the master plan so that it is clear the plan has been approved. An example resolution may look something like this:

ADOPTION OF THE TOWN OF _____, NEW HAMPSHIRE MASTER PLAN

In accordance with New Hampshire RSA 674:4, Master Plan Adoption and Amendment, and New Hampshire RSA 675:6, Method and Adoption, the _____ Planning Board, having held duly authorized public hearings on the _____ Master Plan on _____, 2004 and _____, 2004, hereby adopts and certifies the Master Plan dated _____, 2004.

Chair, Planning Board

Vice Chair, Planning Board

Signature of Board Member

NOTE: The document with original signatures is on file with the Town Clerk in accordance with RSA 675:8.

Filing with the Town Clerk and the NH OEP

Upon adoption, a certified copy of the master plan should be filed with the city or town clerk or the clerk for the county commissions (see RSA 675:8 shown below).

RSA 675:8 Filing of Zoning Ordinances, Historic District Ordinances, Building Codes, Subdivision Regulations, Site Plan Review Regulations and Amendments.

All zoning ordinances, historic district ordinances, building codes, subdivision regulations, site plan review regulations, historic district regulations, and their amendments shall be placed on file with the city, town, or village district clerk, or, in the case of unincorporated towns or unorganized places, with the clerk for the county commissioners for public inspection.

As required by RSA 675:9 (see below), a certified copy of the master plan must also be forwarded to the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning, to be retained for their records.

RSA 675:9 Place for Filing Documents.

I. A copy of each master plan, zoning ordinance, historic district ordinance, capital improvement plan, building code, subdivision regulation, historic district regulation, site plan regulation or amendment which is adopted by a municipality shall be placed in a central file with the office of state planning; provided, however, that failure to file these documents or amendments with the office of state planning shall not affect the validity of the document.