An aerial photograph of a valley with a winding river, a road, and mountains in the background. The text "Remember the Master Plan?" is overlaid in a white box.

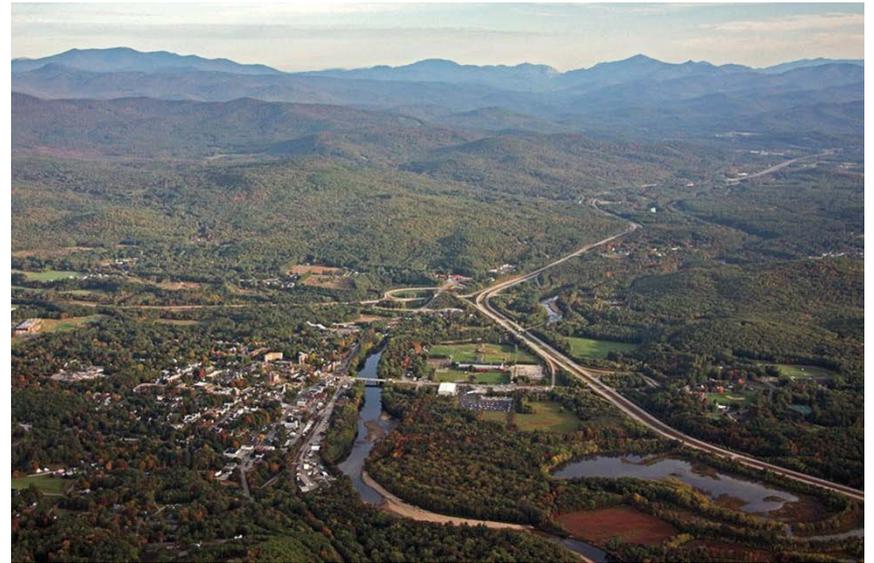
Remember the Master Plan?

**NH Office of Energy & Planning 2015 Spring Planning & Zoning Conference
May 2, 2015**

**June Hammond Rowan, EdD
Associate Director of the Center for the Environment & Research Assistant Professor
Plymouth State University**

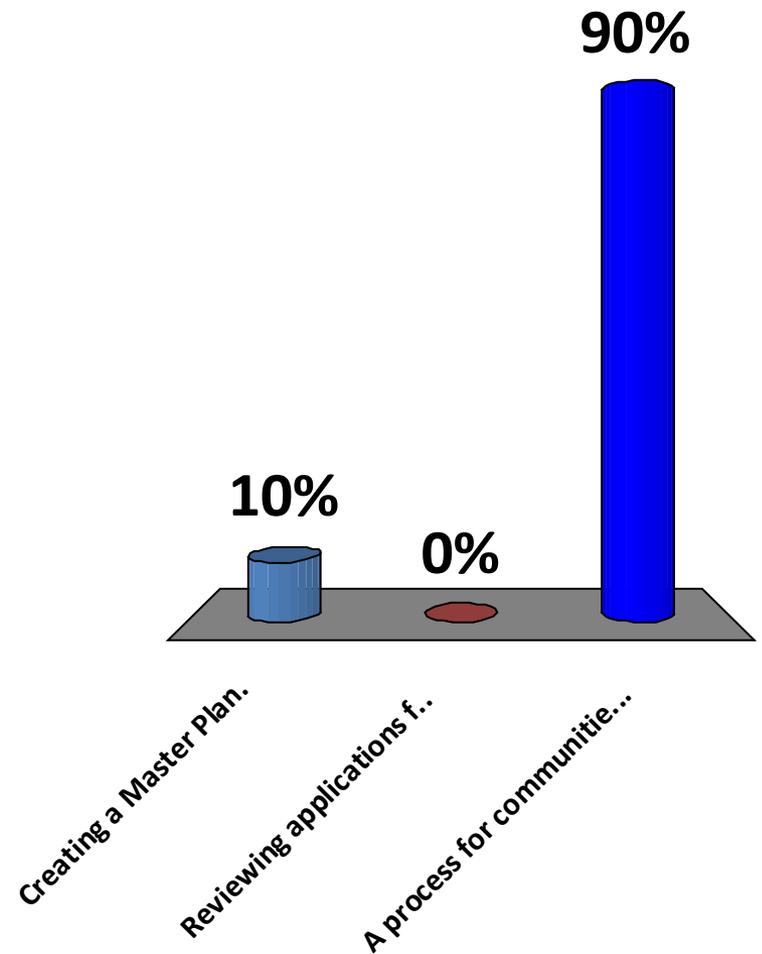
Overview

1. Quiz!
2. Research on Planning Boards and Master Plan
3. What is planning & what is a Master Plan
4. Master Plan steps
5. Implementing your Master Plan



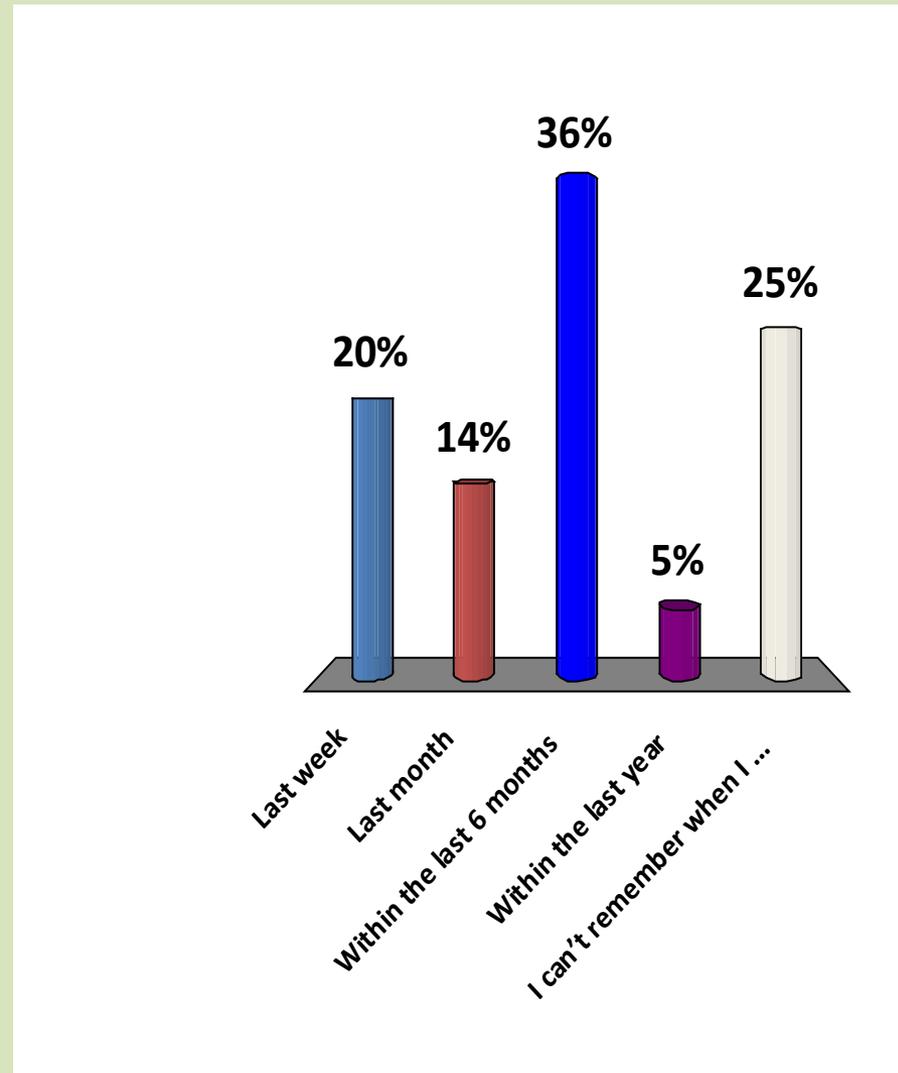
What is Planning?

- A. Creating a Master Plan.
- B. Reviewing applications for development.
- C. A process for communities to help find the right balance of new development and essential services, environmental protection, and innovative change.



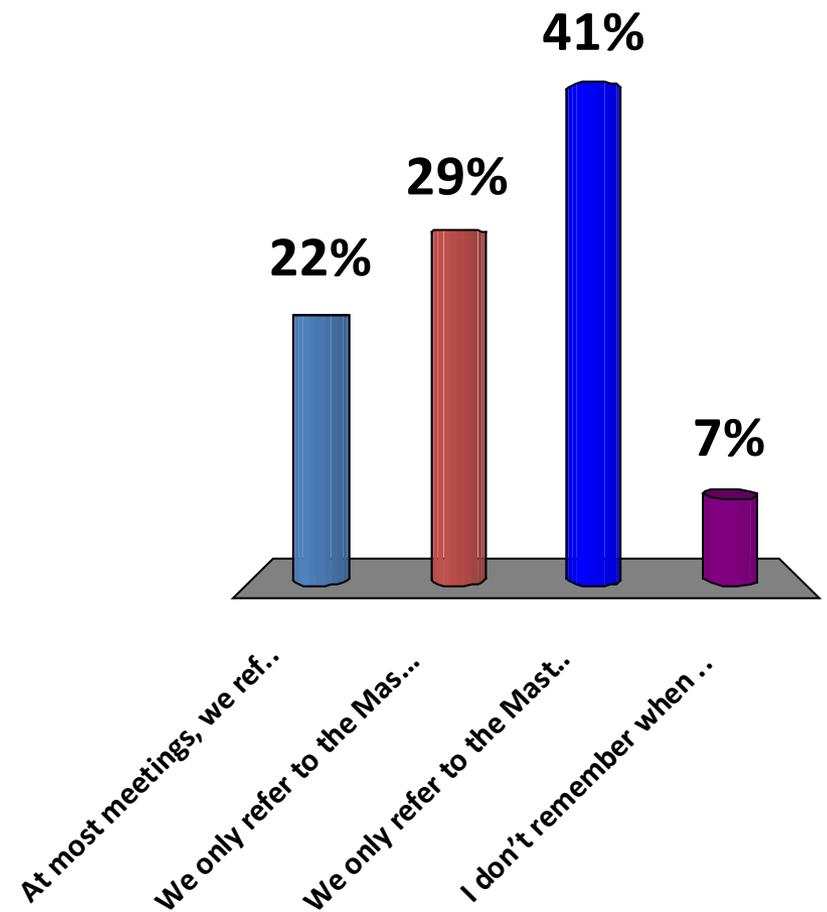
When did you last use your town's Master Plan?

- A. Last week
- B. Last month
- C. Within the last 6 months
- D. Within the last year
- E. I can't remember when I last used the Master Plan.



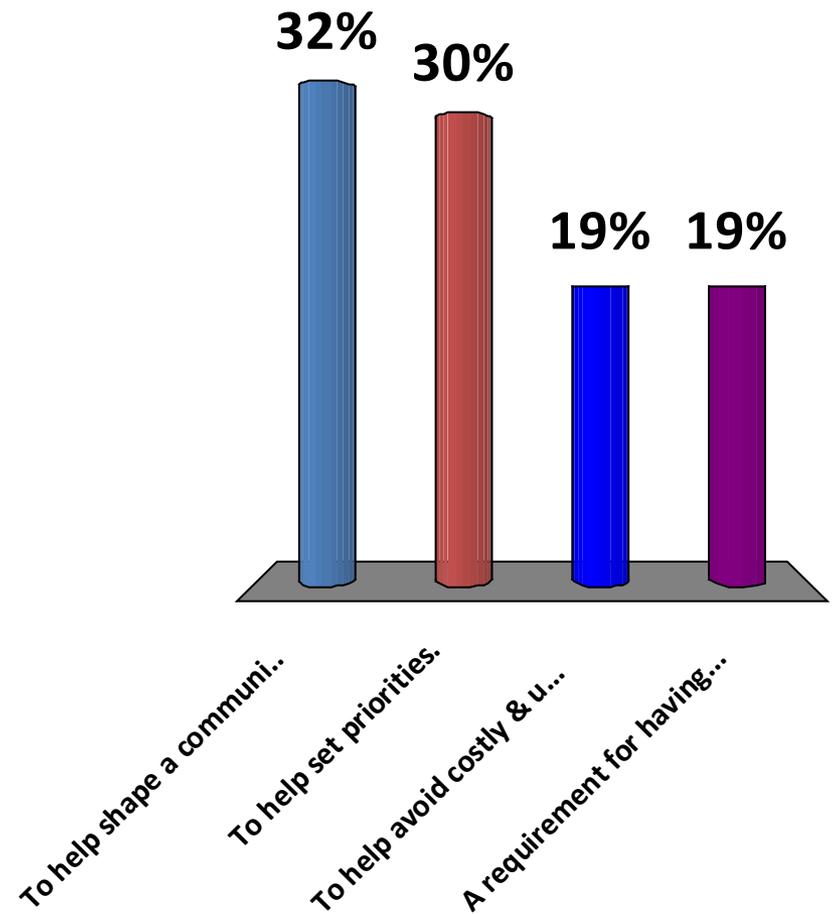
How is the Master Plan used at your Planning Board meetings?

- A. At most meetings, we refer to the Master Plan to help guide us in our decisions.
- B. We only refer to the Master Plan at meetings when we are working on revising land use regulations.
- C. We only refer to the Master Plan at meetings when we are working on revising the Master Plan.
- D. I don't remember when we last used the Master Plan at meeting.



What is the purpose of a Master Plan? (pick all that apply)

- A. To help shape a community through appropriate land use.
- B. To help set priorities.
- C. To help avoid costly & undesirable mistakes detrimental to public interest.
- D. A requirement for having land use regulations.



What does the research show?

- Study:

Explore what Planning Boards in New Hampshire do and how Planning Board members learn about planning.
- Methods – Qualitative Research, Case Studies:
 - Interviews with Planning Board members
 - Observation of Planning Board meetings
 - Document review (1.5 years of Planning Board minutes)

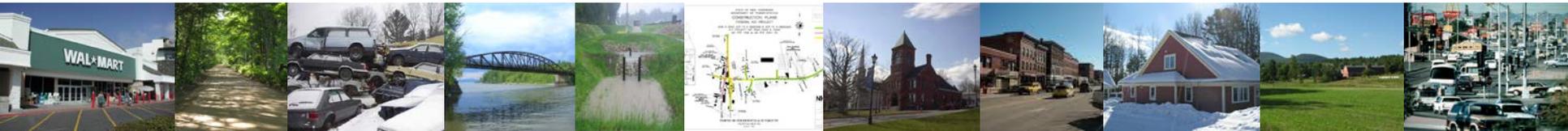


Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with Planning Board members.

Questions:

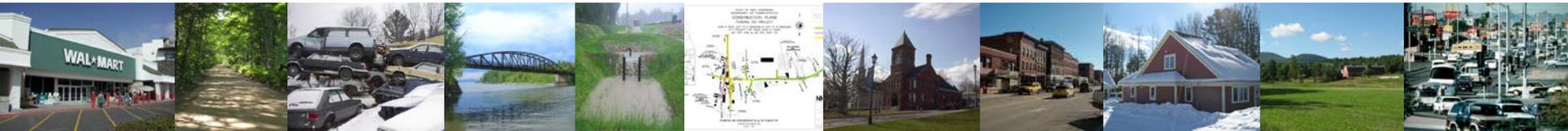
- What is the role of the planning board?
- What is the purpose of the master plan?
- Do you regularly use the master plan?
- If so, how often and in what way? If not, then why not?



Planning Board Role

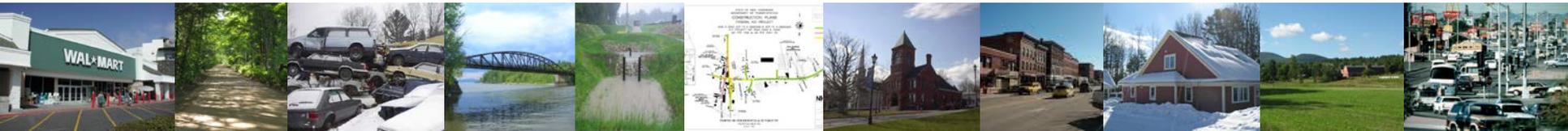
Interviewees describe Planning Board role as:

- Oversee master plan
- Construct and maintain land use regulations
- Protect town, maintain character of town



How does your Planning Board use the Master Plan?

“...When we have proposed changes to the zoning ordinance we’ll...look in the Master Plan to see that it fits with wording somewhere in the Master Plan....So it isn’t like we go through the Master Plan and say, “Okay, we’ve got to do this because the Master Plan suggested it...”



What is the purpose of a Master Plan?

Interviewees said:

- Big picture, vision
- Developers use it
- Do not fully understand purpose
- Do not use it regularly, if at all

“[The Master Plan] is [the developers’] permission to apply”

“...I can’t even tell you the last time I actually looked at the Master Plan.”

“...I’ve never seen [the Master Plan].”



Master Plan

Observations of PB meetings & review of PB minutes:

- Only two references of the Master Plan in 18 months of PB meeting minutes in case study communities
- When Master Plan is used, it supports or follows regulations
- Master Plan is not used to guide regulations



If Planning Boards aren't planning, what are they doing?

Observations of PB meetings & review of PB minutes:

- Planning Boards focus on reviewing applications
- Subdivision, Site Plan Review



Conclusions of the Study

- Planning boards' work primarily involves review & approve of applications for specific sites and parcels of land.
- No evidence of conducting long-range, town-wide planning in study towns:
 - Planning board members have a sense of the purpose of Master Plan, but they rarely use the plan.
 - Master Plan serves as a resource to support a regulatory change, but does not guide land use policy changes.



An aerial photograph of a valley. In the foreground, a river winds through a lush green forest. To the left, a small town with houses and buildings is visible. In the middle ground, there are more trees and a road. In the background, a range of blue mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear sky.

What is planning?
What is the Master Plan?
How is the Master Plan developed?

Nature of Planning

- Planning is process of formulating goals & agreeing on the manner in which these are to be met.
- Planning is forward-looking -- seeks to determine future action.
- Process involves multiple participants with multiple perceptions, beliefs, and objectives (*in other words, it involves PEOPLE*).

(Cullingworth & Caves)



What Is Planning?

American Planning Association & NHOEP

- Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for where & how people live.
- Helps communities find the right balance of new development & essential services, environmental protection, and innovative change.
- Planning enables civic leaders, businesses, & citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.



Impact of Planning

“If planning is done right, the result is often around for 100 years or more, to be enjoyed again and again by the thousands of people who will follow the planner. If it’s done poorly, it is a 100-year error, annoying thousands of people who will follow the planner.”

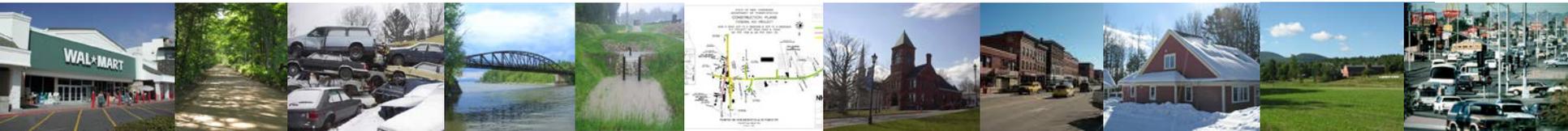
(William Toner – Planning Made Easy)



Master Plan

What is a Master Plan?

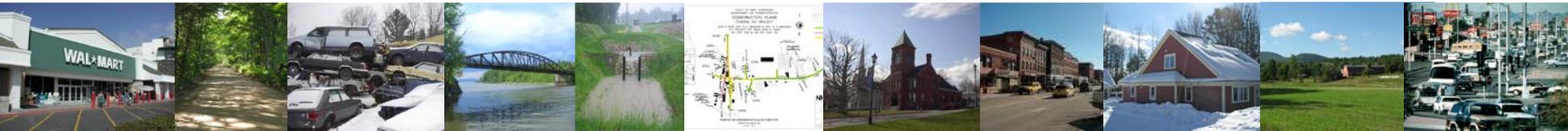
- Statement of
 - where we are today,
 - where we want to be in future (5, 10, or more years),
 - how we will get there.
- A comprehensive vision for a community.
- Also called Comprehensive Plan, Development Plan, General Plan

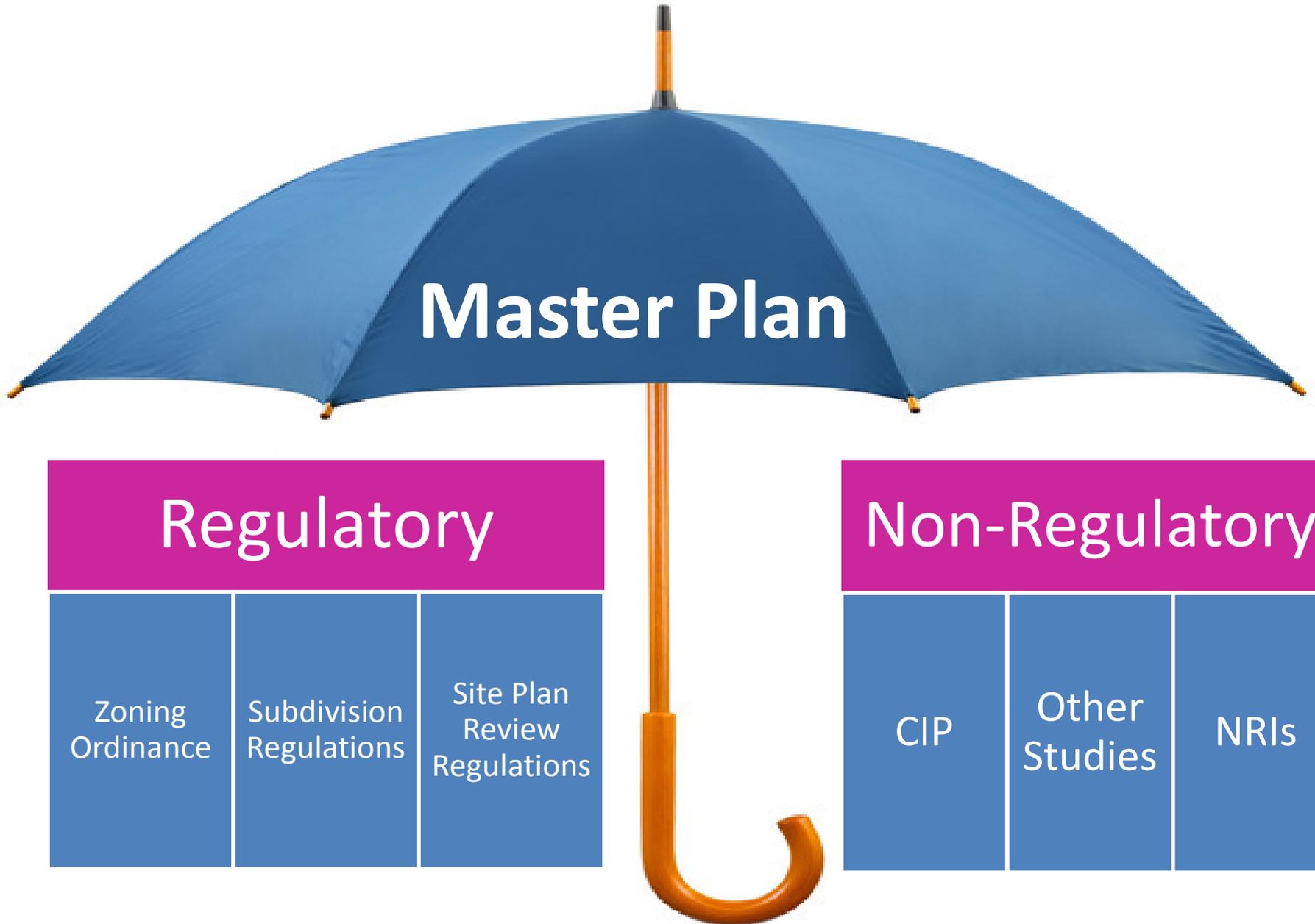


Master Plan

Why write a Master Plan?

- To help shape a community through appropriate land use
- To set priorities
- To avoid costly & undesirable mistakes detrimental to public interest





Master Plan

Regulatory

Zoning
Ordinance

Subdivision
Regulations

Site Plan
Review
Regulations

Non-Regulatory

CIP

Other
Studies

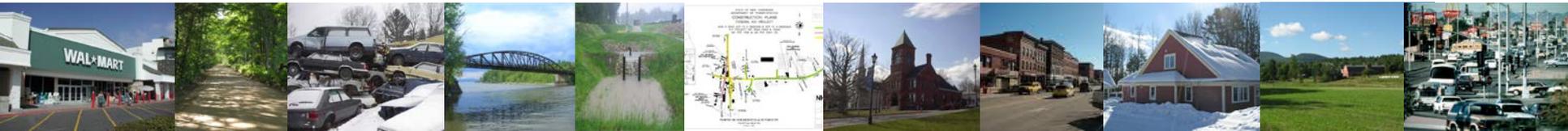
NRIs

RSA 674:2

Required in NH Master Plans:

1. Vision Section

2. Land Use Section



RSA 674:2 – 15 Other Sections that may be in NH Master Plans:

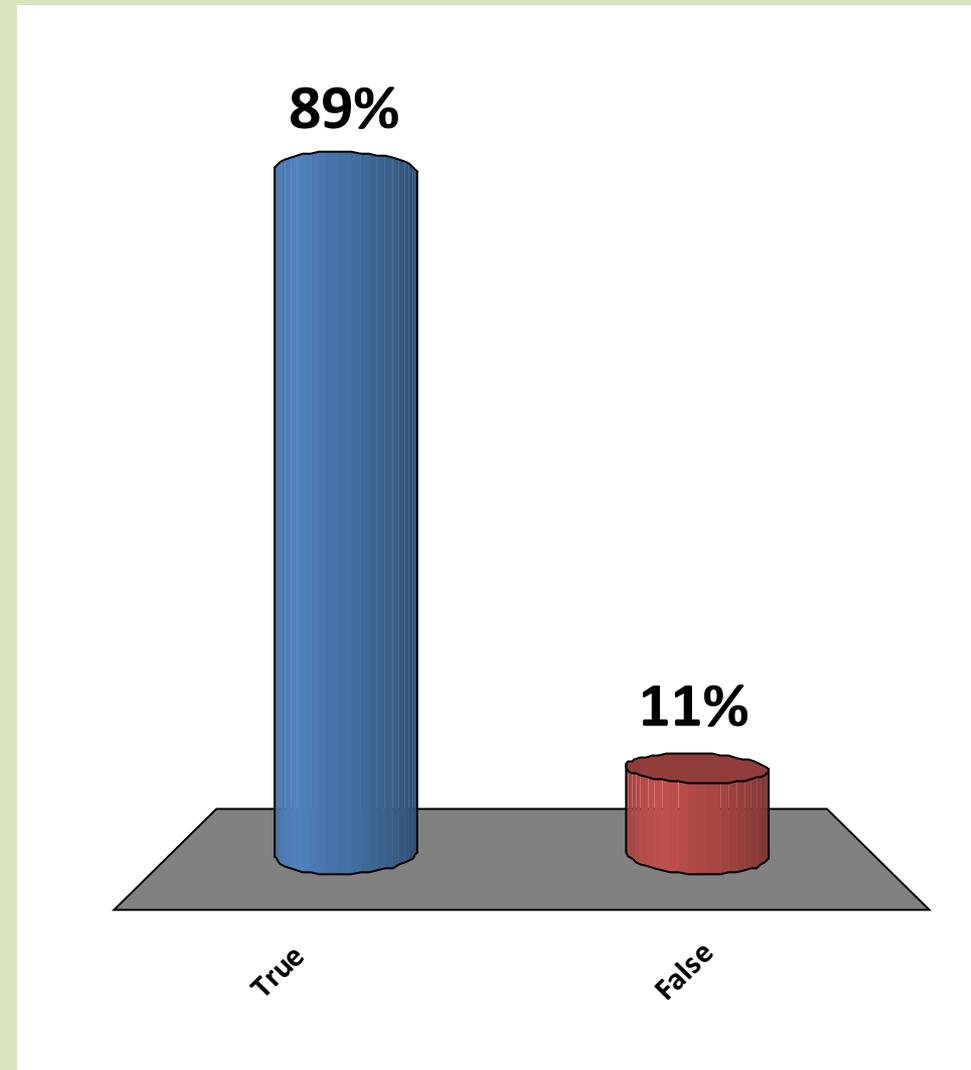
- Transportation
- Community Facilities
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources
- Natural Hazards
- Recreation
- Utility & Public Services
- Historic Resources
(cultural, archeological, stone walls)
- Regional Concerns
- Neighborhood Plans
- Community Design
- Housing
- Implementation
- Energy
- Coastal Management



My community's Master Plan vision section is similar to the following:

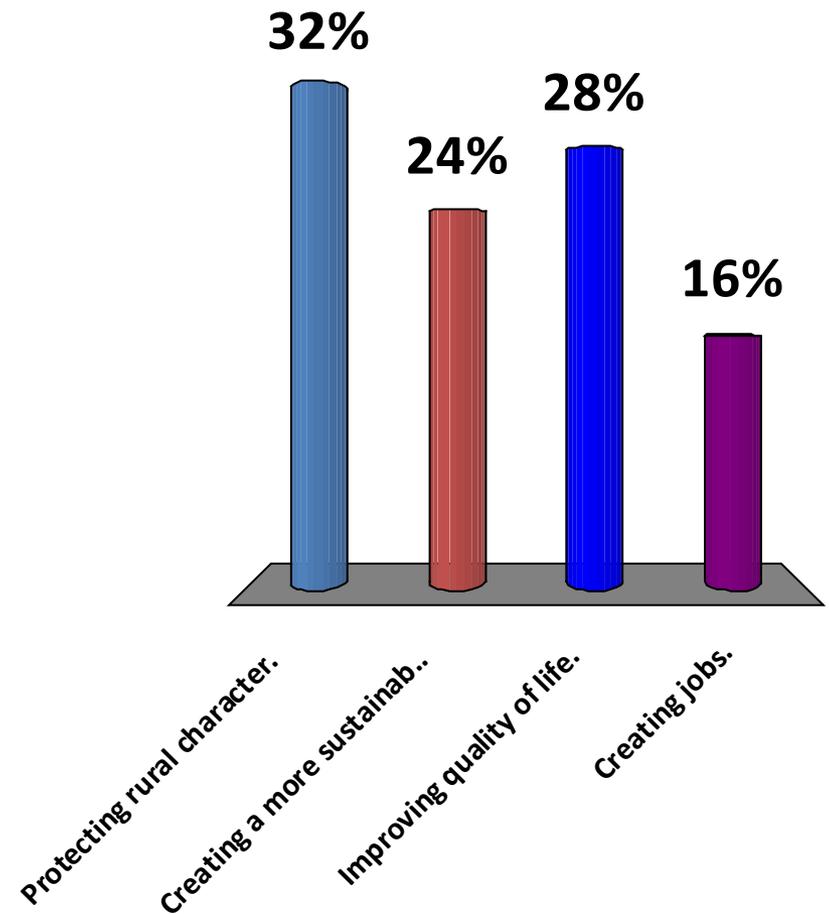
"...achieve responsible growth and community prosperity while preserving the rural characteristics and other qualities that our residents and visitors value..."

- A. True
- B. False



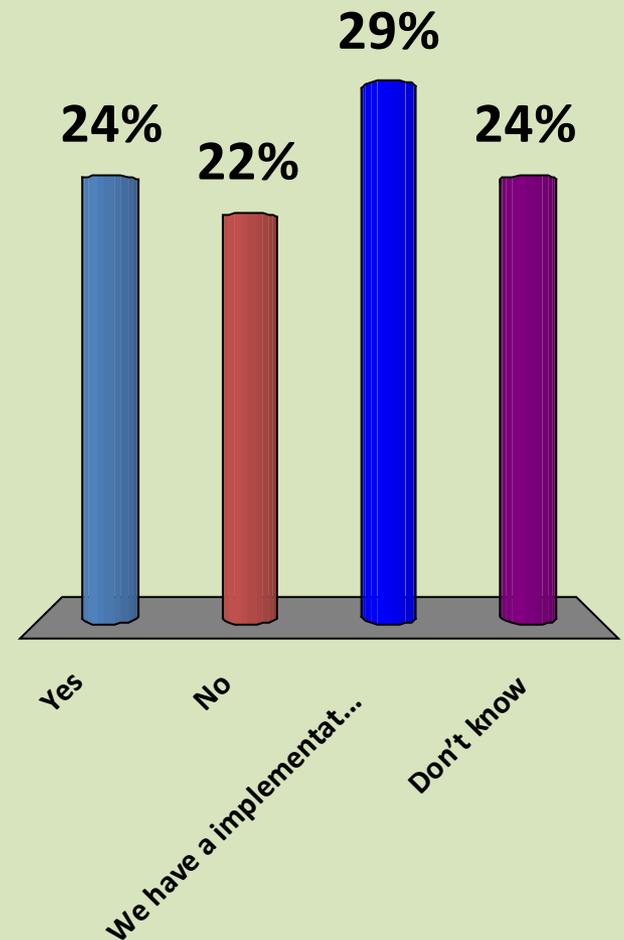
My community's Master Plan vision section includes statements on:

- A. Protecting rural character.
- B. Creating a more sustainable community.
- C. Improving quality of life.
- D. Creating jobs.



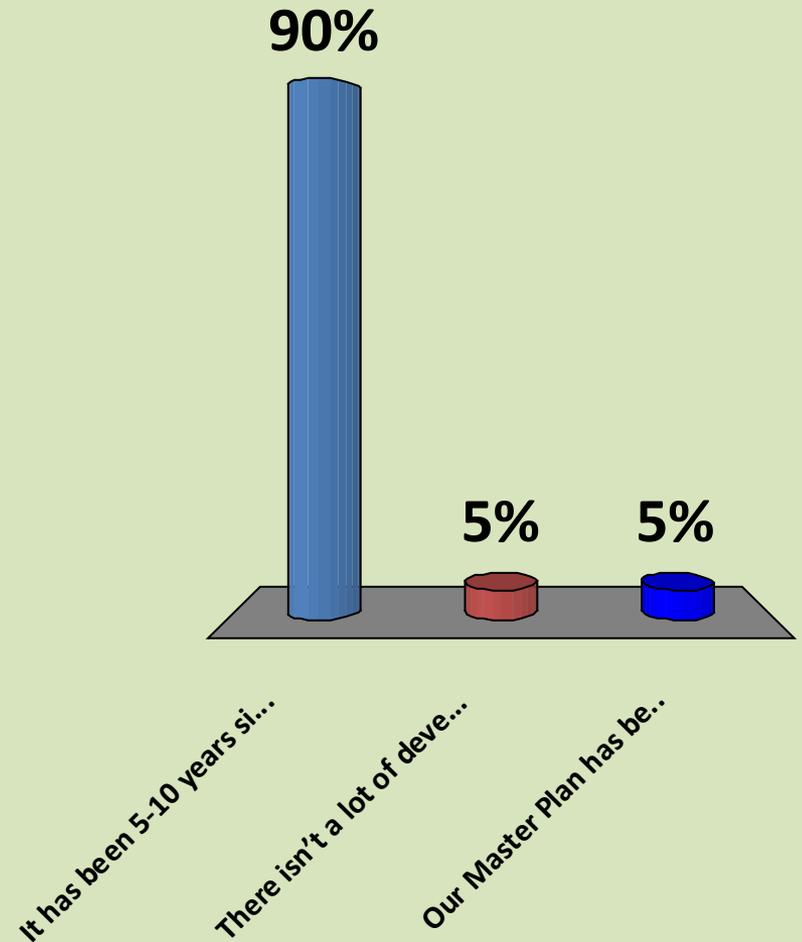
Our Master Plan has an implementation section that we regularly monitor and review to check on the progress of our planning.

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. We have a implementation section, but don't monitor or review it
- D. Don't know



My community updates its Master Plan or develops a new one because:

- A. It has been 5-10 years since we adopted the last Master Plan.
- B. There isn't a lot of development going on now so we have time to work on the Master Plan.
- C. Our Master Plan has been mostly implemented so we are ready to start a new one.



Don't let this happen to you!

“...it seemed that not much had been done in terms of accomplishing the land use goals on the master plan.”

“...getting things done on a master plan is no easy task, but...there has to be a way to make at least some progress.”

“...the meeting ground out the minutiae of every aspect of anything remotely related to the Master Plan, ...[it] was about as dry as toast left on a furnace for a month.”

How do you create a Master Plan?

Recommended in NH - 8 Step Process

(From: *The Planning Board in NH*, NH OEP)

1. Create Community Vision
 2. Data Collection & Inventory
 3. Data Analysis
 4. Evaluate & Select Future Development Scenarios
 5. Prepare & adopt plan
-
6. Implementation
 7. Monitoring
 8. Amending & updating plan

12-24 months to put together Master Plan
Plans need to be amended or redone, 5-10 years



Vision



- Big picture – long range, comprehensive
- Provides a roadmap or direction for the future

You need a vision, but you also need to know how to implement the vision.

“...achieve responsible growth and community prosperity while preserving the rural characteristics and other qualities that our residents and visitors value...”

Our town will be an attractive, family-oriented, & environmentally responsible community as it continues to grow.

Vision - Samples

- Manage growth in order to promote a healthy, prosperous, and successful community...
- Provide a variety of housing types & affordable housing choices...
- Provide a variety of jobs for our residents...
- The town will benefit from network of open spaces...
- Decisions will be made on a comprehensive approach to community development...
- Our small town character and village setting will be cherished & protected...



What comes after the vision?

Our town will be an attractive, family-oriented, & environmentally responsible community as it continues to grow.

How do you know you have achieved the vision?

What data do you need??

Is your vision implementable???

2. Data Collection & Inventory
3. Data Analysis
4. Evaluate & Select Future Development Scenarios
5. Prepare & adopt plan
- 6. Implementation**
- 7. Monitoring**
- 8. Amending & updating plan**

8 Step Process

Recommended process:

1. Community Visioning
 2. Data Collection & Inventory
 3. Data Analysis
 4. Evaluate & Select Future Development Scenarios
 5. Prepare & adopt plan
 6. Implementation
 7. Monitoring
 8. Amending & updating plan
- 

*12-24 months to put together Master Plan
Plans need to be amended or redone, 5-10 years*

In NH:

221 towns and 13 cities

232 Planning Boards

~232 Master Plans

So, if you have a Master Plan, focus on 6 & 7.

Work on your Master Plan regularly!

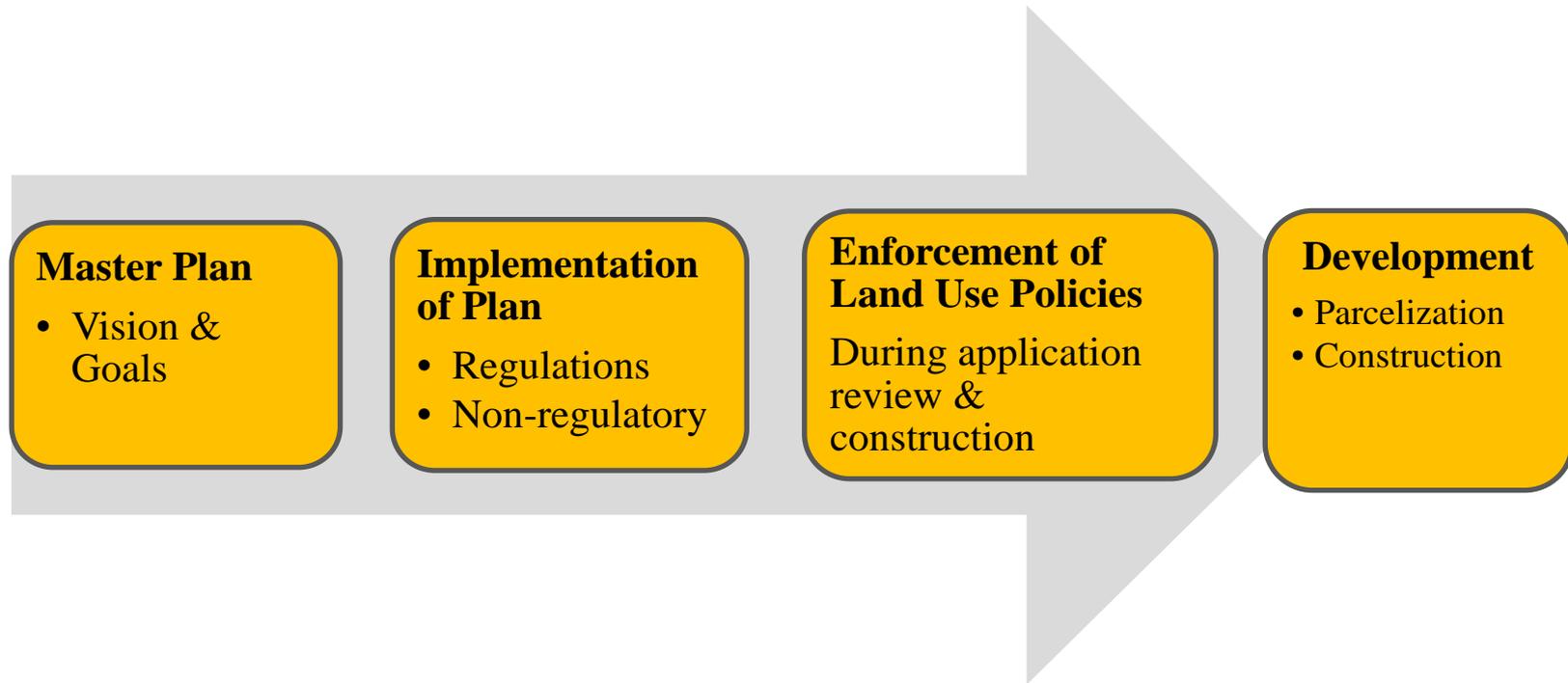
Focus on Implementation

- Implementation involves problem identification and problem solving.
 - What are the barriers to achieving the vision?
 - Who do you need to help implement the vision?
 - What's the timeline?
- Implementation involves knowing how your regulations relate to your Master Plan.

“...achieve responsible growth and community prosperity while preserving the rural characteristics and other qualities that our residents and visitors value...”

Planning Process

(after Loh, 2012)



Policy → **Implementation of Policy**

Enact zoning changes to protect priority open space parcels while encouraging development in targeted village areas.

Responsible Parties:

- Planning Board

Regulatory Action & Status:

1. Amend the buffers in the Wetlands & Shoreland Protection ordinances.
 - Adopted at Town Meeting 2012
2. Adopt regulations that would address development on steep slopes.
 - No action to date.

Encourage “smart growth” through infill & mixed development while protecting Town’s natural assets & the “look and feel” of our Town.

Responsible Parties:

- Planning Board, Select Board, DPW, Conservation Commission

Regulatory Action & Status:

1. Limit the expansion of town water and sewer lines to the current residential and commercial zones and to suggested “Villages.”
 - *No action to date*
2. Amend zoning regulations to designate separate districts that provide for mixed use & infill development.
 - *Accomplished at Town Meeting*

Site Plan Review & Subdivision

- Site preparation is to be conducted with minimal disturbance to existing vegetation. ←
- Landscape treatment shall consist of natural, ←
undisturbed vegetation or features, or the additional planting of ground cover, shrubs or trees as appropriate.

“...achieve responsible growth and community prosperity while preserving the rural characteristics and other qualities that our residents and visitors value...”

Site Plan Review & Subdivision

- No net increase in run-off. 
- Sediment in the run-off water shall be trapped by the use of sediment basins or other acceptable methods. 
- Identify, locate, and show elevation, grades and/or contours at intervals of not more than two (2) feet for the existing and proposed drainage. 

“...achieve responsible growth and community prosperity while preserving the rural characteristics and other qualities that our residents and visitors value...”

Know why you have these requirements

8 Step Process

Recommended process:

1. Community Visioning
2. Data Collection & Inventory
3. Data Analysis
4. Evaluate & Select Future Development Scenarios
5. Prepare & adopt plan
6. Implementation
7. Monitoring
8. Amending & updating plan

12-24 months to put together Master Plan

Plans need to be amended or redone, 5-10 years

**Start with
Implementation in
Mind**

**Do a new plan when your
current one is implemented.**

**If your plan is not
implementable, then revise it,
or create a new one, that is
implementable.**

Using Consultants

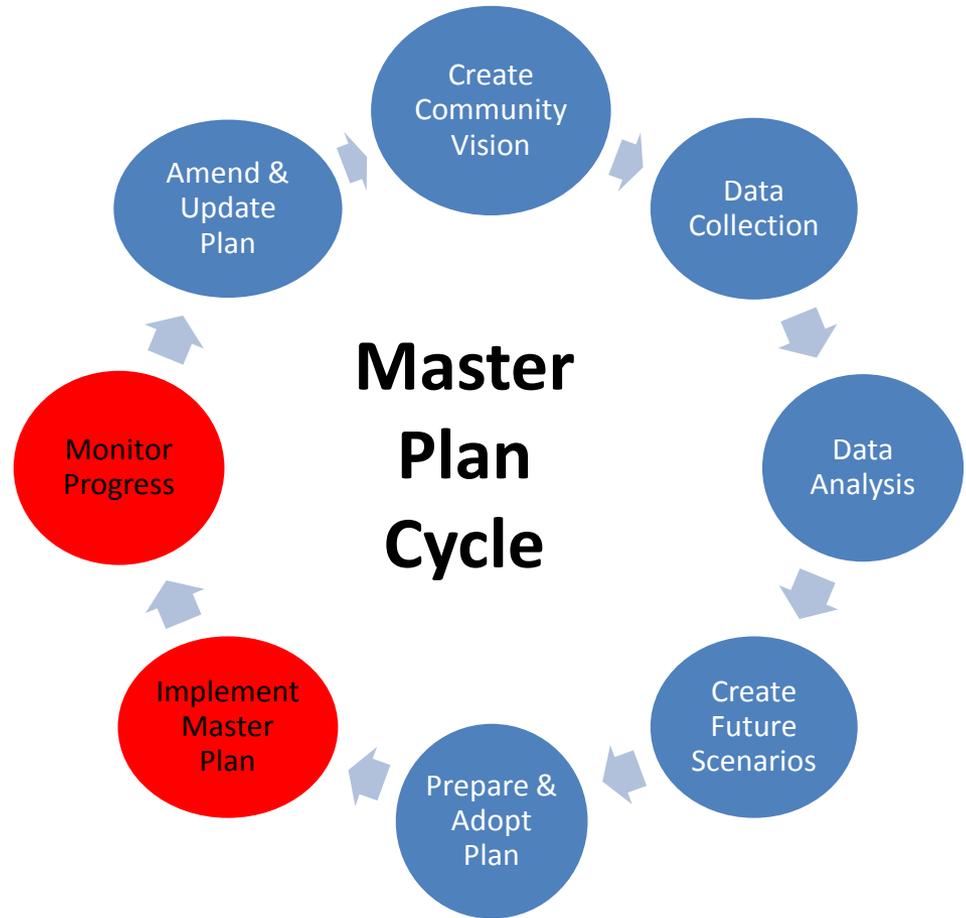
In NH:

232 Planning Boards

At least 1,160 citizen planners

<1/3 of municipalities have professional planners

Decide where you need the most help and use consultants at that point in the cycle.



Creating a Master Plan

Recommended in NH - 8 Step Process

(From: *The Planning Board in NH*, NH OEP)

1. Create Community Vision
2. Data Collection & Inventory
3. Data Analysis
4. Evaluate & Select Future Development Scenarios
5. Prepare & adopt plan

Consultants typically do this part

-
6. Implementation
 7. Monitoring
 8. Amending & updating plan

Consultants leave this part for the Planning Board to do.

Master Plan

What is a Master Plan?

- Statement of where we are today, where we want to be in future, & how we will get there.

Why write a Master Plan?

- To help shape a community through appropriate land use,
- To set priorities
- To avoid costly & undesirable mistakes detrimental to public interest
- **Write the plan to use it.**



Master Plan

- Write the plan in a way you will use it.
- Focus on relevant, real community issues.
- Be innovative - organize your plan around your community's issues, not the topics on a list.
- Have workable recommendations
- Get the people you need to solve the issues involved with your Master Plan.



Conclusion: Don't let this happen to
your community!



Instead, have this happen...!!!

“It was clear that the board members care about the town and its people, while also thoughtfully considering what is best for all parties....Planning holds quite a large amount of responsibility, ... much of a community’s positive aspects occur because of these people and their dedication.”

**Thank you
&
Questions?
(and please return your clickers)**

June Hammond Rowan, EdD

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& Research Assistant Professor

Plymouth State University

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535-3218



Sources:

- Hammond Rowan, J. (2011). *Planning Boards in New Hampshire: What They Do and How They Learn About Planning*. Doctoral dissertation.
- Loh, C. G. (2012). Four Potential Disconnects in the Community Planning Process. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 32: 33. DOI: 10.1177/0739456X11424161.
- Puko, D. & Pashek, J. Creating an implementable comprehensive plan. Presentation at 2013 American Planning Association, Chicago, IL.