

Phase V: Implementation

W If you are
 planning for a year,
 sow rice; if you are
 planning for a decade,
 plant trees; if you are
 planning for a lifetime,
 educate people.
 - Chinese proverb



The last chapter of the master plan, the Implementation section, typically addresses implementation strategies and actions. Generally this consists of recommending changes to existing codes and ordinances to ensure that the plan is carried out.

However, codes and ordinances are not the only means available to implement a plan. Land acquisition; construction of roads, schools, and other public buildings; the limiting of highway access; and construction of public water and sewer services – to name a few activities – all play a part in bringing about the community envisioned in the

This chapter describes Phase V of the master planning process – implementation. The basic planning steps in Phase V include: Step 6: Implementing the Plan; Step 7: Monitoring the Plan; and Step 8: Amending and Updating the Plan.

Step 6: Implementing the Plan: a Summary of Available Tools

Without implementation, the master plan has no real value. The success of a master plan in shaping future growth patterns and influencing public policy decisions is dependent upon the degree to which the plan is actually carried out by those responsible for its implementation.

master plan. Public education related to these topics and the vision of the community as a whole is a key component of implementation.

The adoption of a master plan cannot by itself effect change. It requires separate, legally defined methods to bring about desired changes. Fortunately, all communities have access to a variety of tools that can be used to implement the master plan (see the table on the next page and Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques,” for more information).

New Hampshire statutes provide municipalities with many options. Selected references are cited on the following page (also see <http://nh.gov/oep/laws/index.htm>)

• Zoning	(RSA 674:16-34)
• Subdivision Regulations	(RSA 674:35-42)
• Non-Residential Site Plan Review	(RSA 674:43 and 44)
• Historic Districts	(RSA 674:45-50)
• Scenic Roads	(RSA 231:157 and 158)
• Driveways	(RSA 236:13 and 14)
• Excavations	(RSA 155-E)
• Capital Reserve Funds	(RSA 35: 1-18)
• Public Recreation	(RSA 35-B: 1-17)
• Conservation Commission	(RSA 36-A: 1-6)
• Agricultural Development Rights	(RSA 36-D; 1-14)
• Current Use Taxation	(RSA 79-A: 1-26)
• Acquisition, Development, and Disposal of Industrial Land and Facilities	(RSA 162-G: 1-17)
• Acquiring and Leasing Land for Industrial Development by Towns	(RSA 162-J: 1-17)
• Municipal Economic Development Districts	(RSA 162-K: 1-15)

The balance of this chapter provides an overview of the principle tools of plan implementation, as well as a review of a variety of marketing techniques for how to get people to use your plan. However, before proceeding to this material, it is important that you understand the need for zoning and master plan consistency.

Zoning and Master Plan Consistency

It is likely that your community's zoning regulations, zoning map, and perhaps subdivision regulations will need to be amended to be consistent with your new master plan. In other words, the land use tools that are used most frequently to guide and direct the growth and development of your community must reflect the visions and concepts set out in the plan.

Developing consistency is critically important. If your community has a planning staff, this can be addressed as part of the planning work program. If you don't have a planning staff, establishing a zoning review task force is often the first step of the process. You can also work with your planning board to identify members of the community who:

- are willing to commit to at least one year of monthly meetings in support of the project
- represent different factions and viewpoints regarding land use issues
- can work with other committee members to seek compromise solutions to difficult and sometimes polarizing issues
- are willing to speak openly and candidly about the impacts, both positive and negative, of a proposed zoning change

Changes to zoning and subdivision regulations can also be addressed by seeking the professional expertise of planners, including the regional planning commission. Generally speaking, citizen volunteer committees, unless they are made up of citizens who are comfortable with writing land use codes, will be less effective than professionals in producing zoning amendments and may take much longer to produce results. With this in mind, the community may wish to seek funds to hire a professional consultant who can work with the planning board to successfully complete the necessary changes. Unfortunately, no grant funding is available to communities for the purpose of amending zoning regulations and zoning maps.

Regulatory Actions

1. Zoning

Zoning is the process by which local governments divide the land area in their jurisdictions into districts or zones for the purpose of regulating the activities allowed and the height, bulk, and density of development in those zones.

It is important to bear in mind the distinction between a master plan and a zoning ordinance. Fundamentally, the master plan functions as a guide – it articulates the aspirations a community holds for itself. Zoning, in contrast, is the primary tool a locality uses to implement the land use element or future land use map of the master plan. For example, while the land use plan may recommend that an area be used for residential activity, it is the zoning ordinance that legally establishes a residential district, and delineates its borders on a zoning map, which is ordinarily incorporated by reference into the zoning ordinance.

If your zoning ordinance is inconsistent in any way with your master plan's recommendations, the zoning ordinance will prevail due to its legal status as an ordinance of law. Accordingly, when communities revise their master plans, they should also carefully review their zoning ordinances to ensure that the zoning provisions are consistent with the master plan's recommendations.

As communities have become more active in planning for their futures, so has zoning grown in both scope and complexity. Innovations include agricultural zoning, open space and conservation zoning, historic district zoning, mixed use zoning, performance zoning, and density bonus zoning, to name a few (see Innovative Land Use Controls in Chapter 10, "Tools and Techniques").

Many communities are now considering an array of smart growth principles in the development of their master plans (refer to Chapter 11, "Planning Concepts and Themes," for more information about smart growth). These principles are incorporated

into the community's overall zoning, subdivision, site plan, and building regulatory framework. To assist communities with the development of their master plan section on smart growth, the CD-ROM accompanying this handbook includes a smart growth audit ([click here](#)). The smart growth audit will allow you to review your community's policies, regulations, and ordinances, to determine where revisions may be needed and where smart growth principles can be applied.

2. Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are intended to govern the conversion of raw land into buildable lots and parcels. Subdivision regulations are an important plan implementation tool because they establish standards and requirements for land developments and outline procedures for the submittal, review, and approval of subdivision plats.

The subdivision review process generally has two stages: (1) the submittal of a preliminary plat, showing the layout of lots, roads, open space areas, utility and drainage facilities, and approximate dimensions, including preliminary plans and profiles; and (2) the submittal of a final plat, presenting the subdivision layout and other elements contained in the preliminary plat in greater detail and incorporating any changes that are required by the planning board and/or staff at the time of preliminary plat approval.

In recent years, many communities have expanded their subdivision regulations to address such matters as erosion and sediment control, the preservation of open space, regional stormwater management, and the placement of utilities. In communities that have no zoning, subdivision regulations usually represent the only control over the land development process.

3. Capital Improvement Program

It is quite likely that your master plan has a chapter devoted to community or public facilities such as schools, parks, libraries, streets, water lines, and sidewalks. In many instances, the master plan provides an inventory of existing community facilities, as well as a projection of needed community facilities. Some

communities never realize their projected community facility or public improvement needs, while others regularly bring theirs to fruition. The difference, in many cases, can be explained by the use of a capital improvement program.

The purpose and description of the CIP is summarized in RSA 674:6 below:

674:6 Purpose and Description. The capital improvement program shall classify projects according to the urgency and need for realization and shall recommend a time sequence for their recommendation. The program may also contain the estimated cost of each project and indicate probable operating and maintenance costs and probable revenues, if any, as well as existing sources of funds or the need for additional sources of funds for the implementation and operation of each project. The program shall be based on information submitted by the departments and agencies of the municipality and shall take into account public facility needs indicated by the prospective development shown in the master plan of the municipality or as permitted by other municipal land use controls.

The CIP is a management and fiscal planning tool that identifies and prioritizes needed public improvements and facilities. Properly designed, a CIP will enable a community to identify its capital needs, rank them by priority, coordinate their scheduling, and determine the best way to pay for them within the community's fiscal capacity. Other than its management tool capabilities, the CIP is not involved in the zoning and subdivision regulations of a municipality.

Organizationally, the CIP is a fairly straightforward document. Most CIP's feature three sections: (1) an overview of how the CIP process works; (2) a review of the community's fiscal condition; and (3) a descriptive listing of those capital projects recommended for funding during the CIP period. In addition to describing each project, this section typically includes a justification for each project's inclusion in the CIP and information on how it will be financed.

The CIP has a six-year timeline and is updated annually. The CIP is prepared most often by the planning board and adopted by the governing body, although the statutes provide that a capital improvement program committee can be established. Authorization for the adoption of the CIP is provided in RSA 674:5:

674:5 Authorization. In a municipality where the planning board has adopted a master plan, the local legislative body may authorize the planning board to prepare and amend a recommended program of municipal capital improvement projects over a period of at least 6 years. As an alternative, the legislative body may authorize the governing body of a municipality to appoint a capital improvement program committee, which shall include one member of the planning board, and may include but not be limited to other members of the planning board, the budget committee, or the town or city governing body, to prepare and amend a recommended program of municipal capital improvement projects projected over a period of at least 6 years. The capital improvement program may encompass major projects being currently undertaken or future projects to be undertaken with federal, state, county, and other public funds. The sole purpose and effect of the capital improvement program shall be to aid the mayor or selectmen and the budget committee in their consideration of the annual budget.

RSA 674:5 makes it absolutely clear that adoption of the master plan is required before the CIP can be formulated, and only the governing body of a municipality may adopt the CIP.

Non-Regulatory Actions

1. Establish a Task Force

A popular technique for seeking plan implementation is to establish a task force or a number of implementation committees assigned the responsibility of monitoring and implementing various recommendations and actions of the plan. This technique is helpful, as it reduces the workload of the

planning board vis-à-vis plan implementation and keeps recommendations and projects in the public's eye. A task force or standing committee can be made up of both public officials and community volunteers, as well as planning board members. Membership should be as broad as possible so that your community is well represented and no one member can influence the entire committee.

2. Conduct a Design Charrette

Another helpful method is to conduct a design charrette around a specific recommendation or action, thereby increasing public focus and attention on how best to implement it. Unlike approaches that devote attention to a variety of recommendations or actions in a committee, a design charrette is a much more intensive process. The event is typically held over several days, and upon completion, a design plan is developed that identifies numerous implementation strategies (for more information about charrettes, see Chapter 10, "Tools and Techniques").

3. Partner with Non-Profit Organizations

There are also many non-profit organizations – including land trusts, conservation groups, and bicycle clubs, to name a few – that can be helpful in master plan implementation. The New Hampshire Main Street Program is another useful program in master plan implementation. Often it provides recommendations related to economic development, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and other areas addressed through participation in the program (see the Main Street Center web site at <http://www.nhcd-fa.org/mainstreet.html> for more information).

4. Reference the Plan in Local Decisions

The master plan should be referenced at public meetings and public hearings. The goals, policies, and recommendations of the plan must be integrated into the day-to-day activities of your community or it will not be fully utilized as a tool for guidance, focus, and change.

Ask your municipality's boards, commissions, and committees to utilize and reference the master plan in all their various projects, activities, and decisions, so that it becomes a common or required practice. The question that should be asked with respect to any municipal project or decision is: "Is it consistent with the master plan?" Consistency with all the applicable sections, goals, policies, and recommendations of the master plan should be clearly identified and documented as an integral part of any project or local decision.

It must become common practice to reference the master plan for it to be applied at every level of local government. Some communities have numbered all the key goals, policies, and recommendations in their plan so that they can be readily cited and reviewed at public meetings and hearings. This technique can be very helpful. The more a goal or policy is referenced, the more it can be identified and applied.

5. Prepare an Implementation Checklist

An effective way to implement the goals and recommendations of a master plan is to devise a checklist for use by the planning board and governing body. Your city or town officials and staff can use this checklist to assess progress, or it can be used as a device to inform the public, community leaders, boards, and commissions about the need to accomplish certain tasks. No matter how it is used, the checklist affords an opportunity to measure accomplishments and identify challenges.

At a minimum, a checklist should include

- each strategy or action step mentioned in the plan
- a relative timeframe for accomplishing each task (short-term, mid-term, long-term)
- the department, organization, or individual responsible for implementation
- the cost in dollars (best estimate)
- the cost in time (volunteer or paid)

Additional Strategies for Master Plan Implementation

The following additional strategies are meant to help you implement and market your plan, once it has been adopted and is ready to be used. Some of these strategies were developed by planners with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in Springfield, Massachusetts, who prepared the original *Planner on a Disc* handbook and interactive disc (see web site at: <http://www.pvpc.org/>).

1. Create a Success Story

Every great achievement begins with a small first step. An early success story will help to build momentum for more challenging and time-consuming tasks, such as changing the zoning map or building an industrial park. Your community should identify at least one “quick and easy” project, a project that can be accomplished, start to finish, within a hundred days.

2. Market Your Plan

Whether or not you can create a success story within the first hundred days of completing your plan, ultimately you must continue your public outreach efforts and look for ways to keep your master plan in the public eye. In order for people to value and use the plan, they must have access to it. The following suggestions are offered to help you publicize and market your plan:

- Start a town planning newsletter to distribute information about master plan implementation and other land use issues.
- Erect new signs identifying villages or neighborhoods within your community.
- Appoint a task force or committee to begin one of the “big” projects, such as amending your community’s zoning ordinance or zoning map.
- Sponsor an event to highlight a key issue – a downtown clean-up day, a tree-planting ceremony to initiate the revitalization of a neighborhood park, a guided tour of redevelopment sites in your business district, or perhaps a farm breakfast highlighting local farm products.

3. Make Printed Copies

Printed copies of the published plan should go to every municipal board, elected official, commission, committee, task force, agency, and department in your community that you can think of. Newly elected leaders should receive a copy when they assume public office. Libraries, schools, and other public places where people may go to find information should be given copies of the plan. Local real estate professionals, architects, engineers, surveyors, builders, lawyers, and bankers should also have copies of your plan. You should be creative and not overly selective in your distribution decisions. Obviously, you will need to plan your budget in order to make an adequate number of copies. Remember: it is the community’s plan, so get it out there for all to see.

4. CD-ROM

Instead of printing hard copies of your master plan, it can be duplicated on a compact disc and then distributed to the public in this format. Generally this alternative should be less expensive than publishing and printing your planning document, though that depends upon the size of your plan. If you were to print only an executive summary, it would be far less expensive. Of course, you can also post your plan on the Internet or your community’s webpage.

5. Prepare an Executive Summary

It is highly recommended that an executive summary stating the overall conclusions of the master plan be created to share key points with those who do not have time to read the entire document. The executive summary should be short enough to fit on a single piece of paper or several pages or on a fold-out, making it an affordable distribution option for almost every community. The executive summary should be widely distributed and given especially to all the schools, churches, social organizations, businesses, lawyers, and bankers in your community. (**[click here to see the Nashua Master Plan as an example – http://www.gonashua.com/planning/planningboard/masterplan/MasterPlan.asp](http://www.gonashua.com/planning/planningboard/masterplan/MasterPlan.asp)**). You may also want to consider leaving copies in doctors’ offices, train/bus terminals, and other waiting areas. Again, you will need to plan your budget in order to make an adequate

number of copies to blanket the community, as well as have copies on hand for the public at the town or city hall.

6. Prepare Poster/Newspaper Inserts

It is often helpful to develop visually intriguing posters that can describe and summarize the goals of the plan. These can be distributed around your community or reduced in size and placed as inserts in your community's newspaper(s).

7. Use the Internet

If your town or city has a website, put your plan (or at least the executive summary) online. If it doesn't have one already, the master plan is a great reason for your community to get a website. Online documents are affordable, available to all who have Internet access, and very flexible – changes are inexpensive and virtually immediate.

Additional Comments

It is important that you produce a clean, crisp master plan document that looks good, rather than a poorly designed report riddled with errors. The overall appearance and layout of your master plan is critically important in drawing people to it.

Many people, when they hear the words “master plan,” think of a thick document with lots of graphics and maps. But, as previously pointed out, master plans can take many different shapes and sizes. Plans can be short or long. They can be formally bound or placed in a loose-leaf or three ring notebook that allows sections to be easily replaced and updated as needed. However, presenting your master plan in a loose-leaf notebook can be expensive, depending upon the number of notebooks that you need to buy.

As noted earlier, you can reduce costs by printing short but colorful, eye-catching executive summaries. The value of the executive summary is that it communicates the key elements of the plan and can be widely distributed at not too great a cost. Similarly,

the executive summary can be published as a two-sided “fold out.” One side, for example, could show the community's vision of the future in words and images. The other side could show the future land use map and document the key policies of the master plan. Additionally, the executive summary or the entire master plan can be posted on the Internet. (For suggestions and more information about publishing and printing your master plan, refer to Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques.”)

Steps 7 and 8: Monitoring, Amending, and Updating Your Plan

A master plan is never finished; like all dynamic systems, communities evolve. In order to maintain its relevancy, the plan must be updated on a regular basis. How often this occurs depends on the specific circumstances in your community. Some good rules of thumb, as well as the minimum requirements of state law, are provided below.

Annual Review – Monitoring the Plan

Once a master plan has been formally adopted, it should be kept current with changing conditions. This is particularly true with respect to major land use changes, policy revisions, and demographic conditions. There are no state requirements that a master plan be reviewed on an annual basis. However, it might be prudent to have the planning board, its subcommittee, staff, or appointed volunteers conduct an annual review of the plan to check its progress in being implemented and ensure that it stays current.

Simply going over an implementation checklist (as previously described) at a public meeting with the planning board could be sufficient to uncover any tasks that were neglected the previous year. Minor course corrections in policies or goals could also be identified and discussed. Any amendments to the master plan must be acted upon according to the procedures required under RSA 675:6.

Five-Year Review

RSA 674:3 II. recommends that revisions be made to a master plan every 5 to 10 years. However, the state statutes contain no prescribed procedures or recommendations for conducting this review. There is a good chance that after five years, enough things will have changed to make it worthwhile to take a comprehensive look at the plan.

It would be wise to begin revising and updating the plan one topic, section, or chapter at a time, five years after its adoption. This would provide the opportunity to review the entire document over the course of a few years. If revisions are needed, the planning board can elect to amend those sections of the plan immediately or wait until a comprehensive update is made. If the planning board elects to wait to amend the plan, an ongoing record of the needed changes should be maintained.

Ten-Year Review

When ten years have passed since the adoption of a master plan, it is time to consider a comprehensive update of the plan. A new planning and public outreach process should be developed to identify the issues and concerns that have evolved, changed, or appeared since the last plan. At that point, you should return to the beginning of this handbook for advice and recommendations on how to proceed.