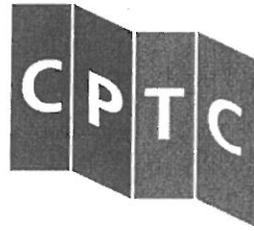


# The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative



**CITIZEN PLANNER**  

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**TRAINING COLLABORATIVE**

## HANDOUT

### Planning With Community Support

**The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative:**

*University of Massachusetts Extension*

*Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development*

*American Planning Association, MA Chapter*

*Massachusetts Assn. of Regional Planning Agencies*

*Massachusetts Assn. of Planning Directors*

[www.masscptc.org](http://www.masscptc.org)



# Planning with Community Support Resource Packet

Ezra Haber Glenn, AICP\*  
Citizen Planner Training Collaborative

There are many many good resources available to guide you through the components of a neighborhood or community-wide master plan, the steps to take to prepare one, and tips to help you run a successful process. Included here are some good starting guidance materials from the Commonwealth and other public and private groups around New England. *Remember: these are resources, not recipes—the best process to follow is the one that speaks to your community and mobilizes people to get involved, regardless of what the experts say.*

## Contents

1. Massachusetts General Law, c. 41 §81D, Components of a Master Plan in Massachusetts
2. Selected sections from “Building Vibrant Communities: Linking Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, and the Environment,” published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (multiple offices), 2000. The complete Guide is available online at [http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/booklet/book\\_website/index.htm](http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/booklet/book_website/index.htm). *Note: this guide was issued as part of the state’s “Executive Order 418” calling for the creation of local Community Development Plans; this specific program is no longer in operation, but the challenges, principles, and practices discussed in the attached materials are still relevant in our communities.*
3. “Getting Started” and “Basics of Planning Theory” from *Preparing a Master Plan for Your Community*, published by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning and the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission, 2004. Although this comes from the other side of the border, it is really an excellent resource for designing and undertaking a community master plan process. The complete guide is available online at <http://www.nh.gov/oep/resource-library/planning/>, and in-

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\*Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139; [eglenn@mit.edu](mailto:eglenn@mit.edu); 617.253.2024.

cludes an very thorough bibliography on visioning, citizen participation, and other aspects of preparing a comprehensive plan.

4. "How to Conduct a Community Visioning Process", also from the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning and the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission.
5. Selected sections from "The Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook", published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 2008. Although this guide is specifically intended to address the creation (or update) of an Open Space and Recreation Plan under the requirements of the Division of Conservation Services, many of the lessons and strategies for structuring the planning process and coordinating stake-holder involvement are worth considering. The complete Workbook is available online at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/eea/dcs/osrp-workbook08.pdf>
6. "What Will Become of the Land We Love" and "A Symphony of Solutions" from *Community Rules: A New England Guide to Smart Growth Strategies*, published by the Conservation Law Foundation, 2002. The complete report is available online at <http://vnrc.org/resources/smart-growth-resources/smart-growth-publications/community-rules-chapter-downloads/>.

**MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW  
PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT  
TITLE VII. CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS  
CHAPTER 41. OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS  
IMPROVED METHOD OF MUNICIPAL PLANNING**

**Chapter 41: Section 81D. Master plan; economic development supplement**

Section 81D. A planning board established in any city or town under section eighty-one A shall make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan.

Such plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. The comprehensive plan shall be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards, and shall include the following elements:

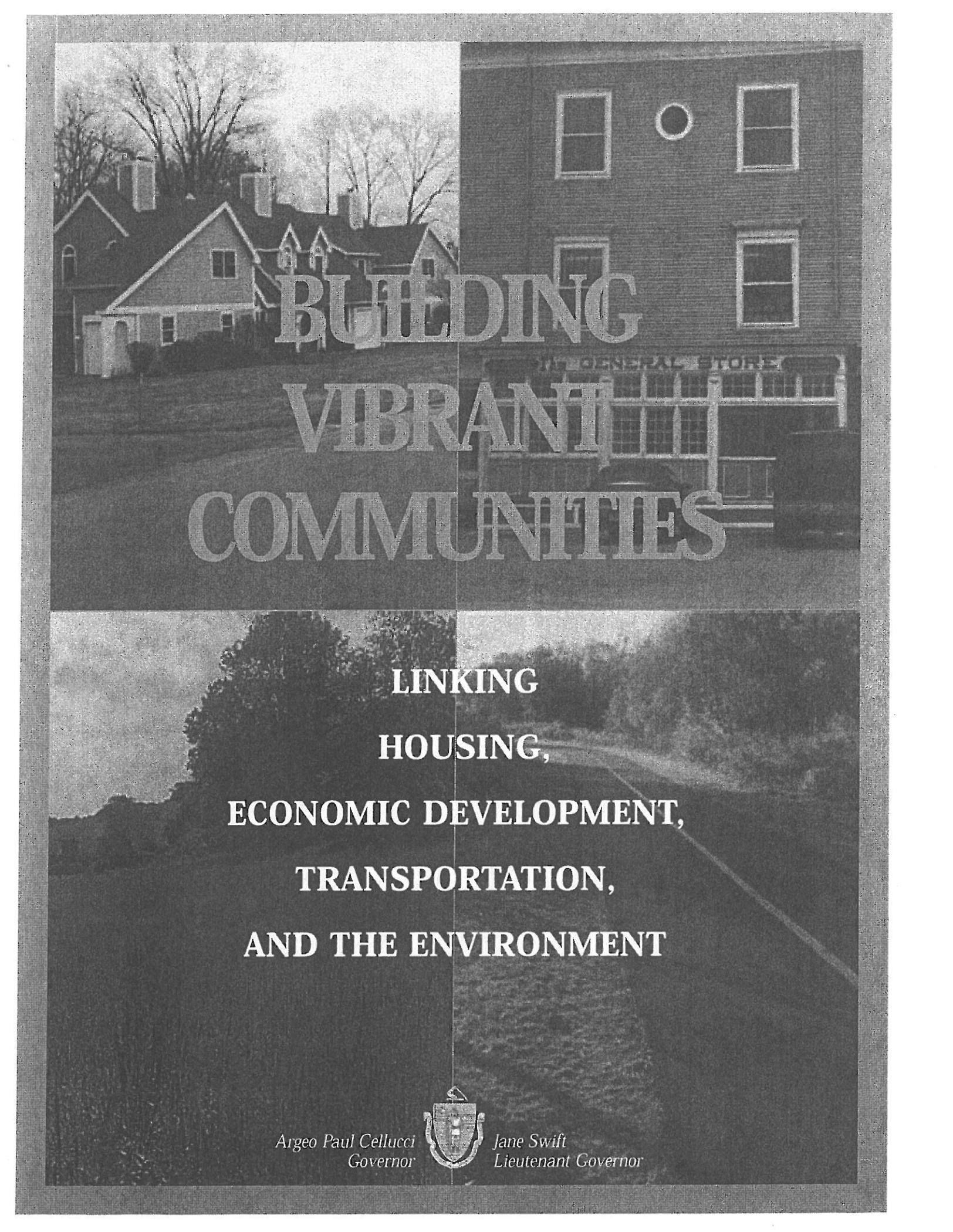
- (1) Goals and policies statement which identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development. Each community shall conduct an interactive public process, to determine community values, goals and to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with these goals.
- (2) Land use plan element which identifies present land use and designates the proposed distribution, location and inter-relationship of public and private land uses. This element shall relate the proposed standards of population density and building intensity to the capacity of land available or planned facilities and services. A land use plan map illustrating the land use policies of the municipality shall be included.
- (3) Housing element which identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This element shall identify policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens.
- (4) Economic development element which identifies policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities.
- (5) Natural and cultural resources element which provides an inventory of the significant natural, cultural and historic resource areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the protection and management of such areas.
- (6) Open space and recreation element which provides an inventory of recreational and resources and open space areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the management and protection of such resources and areas.
- (7) Services and facilities element which identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted needs for facilities and services used by the public.

(8) Circulation element which provides an inventory of existing and proposed circulation and transportation systems.

(9) Implementation program element which defines and schedules the specific municipal actions necessary to achieve the objectives of each element of the master or study plan. Scheduled expansion or replacement of public facilities or circulation system components and the anticipated costs and revenues associated with accomplishment of such activities shall be detailed in this element. This element shall specify the process by which the municipality's regulatory structures shall be amended so as to be consistent with the master plan.

Such plan shall be made, and may be added to or changed from time to time, by a majority vote of such planning board and shall be public record. The planning board shall, upon completion of any plan or report, or any change or amendment to a plan or report produced under this section, furnish a copy of such plan or report or amendment thereto, to the department of housing and community development.

A city or town which has an established master or study plan under section eighty-one A and applies for a state grant from the commonwealth shall prepare and keep on file within such city or town an economic development supplement; provided, however, that such city or town shall not be required to prepare such supplement if such city or town has a supplement on file. Such supplement shall be at least one page in length and shall contain the goals of the city or town with respect to industrial or commercial development, affordable housing, and preservation of parks and open space.



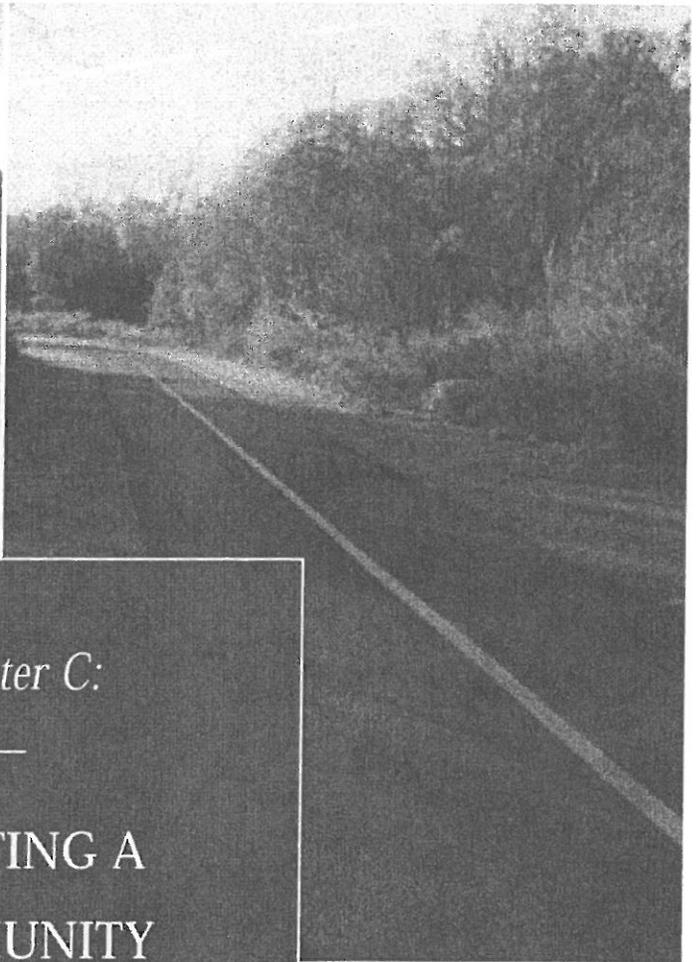
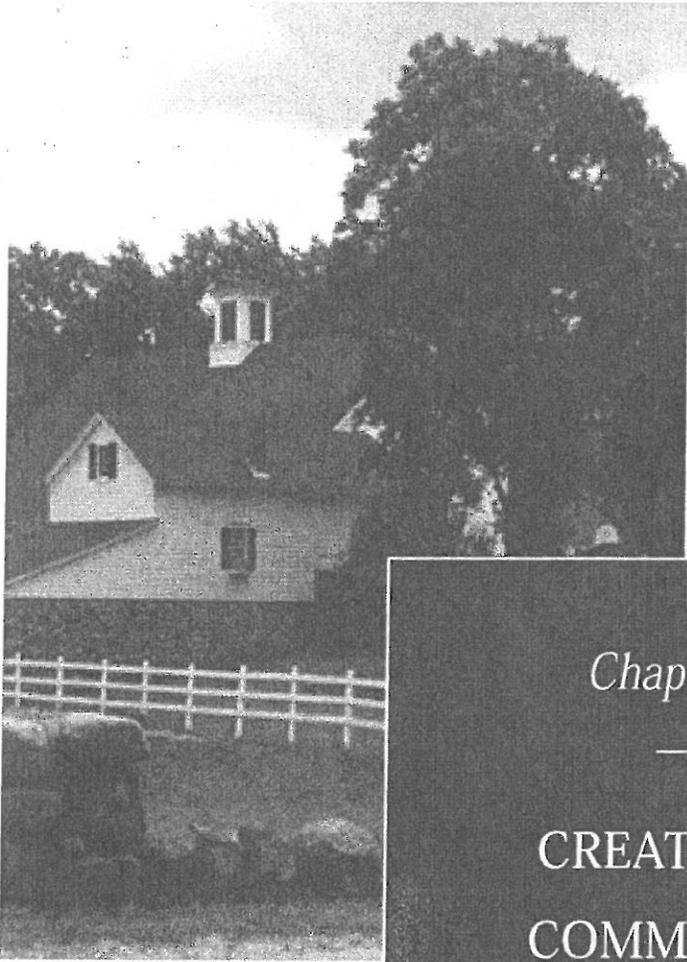
**BUILDING  
VIBRANT  
COMMUNITIES**

**LINKING  
HOUSING,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
TRANSPORTATION,  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

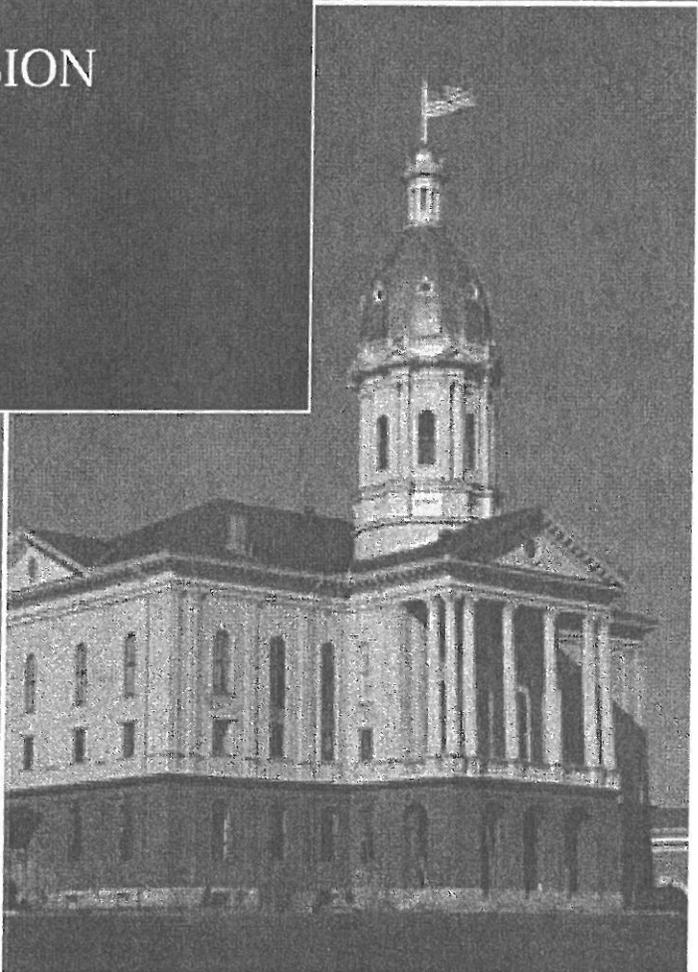
*Argeo Paul Cellucci*  
Governor



*Jane Swift*  
Lieutenant Governor



*Chapter C:*  
—  
CREATING A  
COMMUNITY  
VISION





### *Citizen participation*

*Making the planning process community-based, with broad citizen input, is a way to make sure that many voices and views are heard. Encourage active involvement. Communities that use consensus to set goals and objectives for the future find that the plan is easier to implement when complete.*

### *Sample efforts*

- Visioning meetings
- Focus groups
- Neighborhood meetings
- Community surveys
- Citizen advisory committee meetings

### *Effective strategies*

- *Involve citizens early and consistently*
- *Be flexible, accommodating unique needs and situations in the community*
- *Be responsive to public input and communicate the final decision*
- *Involve business, environmental, civic and other interests*

Understanding a community's past, analyzing its present, and articulating its residents' vision for the future: these three elements make up a process known as "Visioning." This process is a key step in creating a Community Development Plan.

The purpose of the Visioning phase is to identify the points on which residents agree and disagree, and to build a common framework through listening and dialogue. That framework will shape the subsequent stages of the community planning process.

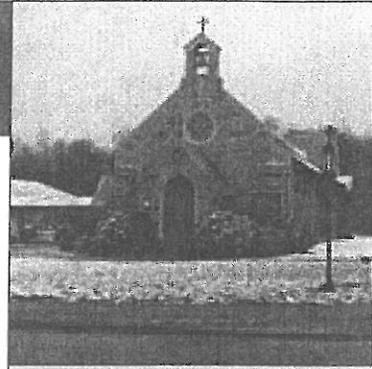
### PLANNING BASICS

In any community, change is inevitable. You can either seek to guide change, or you can just sit back and let it happen. Choices must be made, because "not to decide is to decide."

Goal-setting is an essential element of good planning. The more clearly you can define the needs of your community, the more effective the entire planning process will be.

During the "Visioning" phase of the Community Development Planning process, the community develops a set of goals and priorities. No matter what your specific needs are determined to be, awareness of the following basic planning themes will help to focus the Visioning process:

- Develop a community-based planning process with broad participation.
- Promote interlocal cooperation.
- Provide housing across a broad range of income levels.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas, conserve open space, and preserve the historic built environment.
- Promote sustainable economic development.
- Provide for transportation that focuses on the movement of people and goods rather than automobiles; increase the use of alternatives to automobiles, including bikeways and pedestrian ways.
- Build on the character and individuality of Massachusetts communities.



### *Sustainable development*

*Sustainable development considers the needs of future generations and recognizes the connectedness of social, economic and environmental goals. It encourages the location of development where services and infrastructure such as water, sewer, and transportation services are already available.*

### *Each picture is worth a thousand words.*

*The community of Westwood recently completed a master planning process in which planning board members, equipped with disposable cameras, took pictures around town that captured the essence of the community. They presented the pictures at a public meeting and explained the reasons for selecting these pictures. The pictures were then displayed at the public library, and citizens were encouraged to comment and to suggest other assets/liabilities for depiction.*

### Getting started

Here are some suggestions to help you get your community's planning process underway:

- Form a Planning Committee that is inclusive and representative of your community. If there is a Comprehensive (Master Plan) Committee in place and its members adequately represent the community's diversity, this committee could serve this function.
- Make GIS maps, buildout analysis and the community data profile (See Chapter A "Buildout Analysis, GIS Map and Community Data Profile for Your Community") available to committee members and residents.
- Decide if you want to hire a facilitator to help you in the Visioning process (See Section E "Choosing a Consultant").
- If you opt to self-facilitate, decide on the appropriate planning tool(s): brainstorming, charrette, etc., to develop your community's vision and goals and objectives (See Appendix AA "Facilitation Techniques for the Visioning Process").

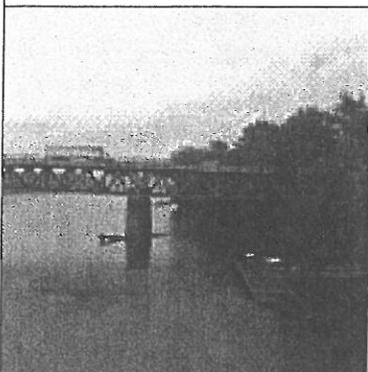
### Creating the Assets and Liabilities Inventory

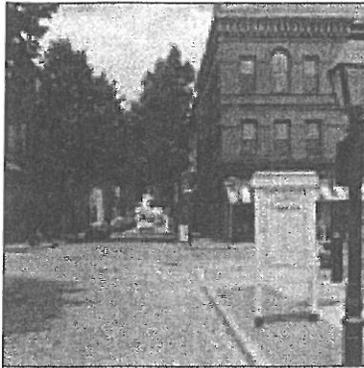
An Assets and Liabilities Inventory is a way of depicting the current state of affairs in your community. It defines the current assets the community values and wants to preserve, and it can highlight weak or unfavorable aspects that the community wants to change.

An Assets and Liabilities Inventory should:

- Function as a "visual tour" of your community, to quickly communicate what citizens view as "assets" and "liabilities".
- Use maps, pictures, titles, graphs, and explanatory text to create a portrait of present conditions.
- Involve a broad group of citizens in gathering images and working together to develop the inventory.
- Serve as a tool to generate consensus support for planning goals.

The Assets and Liabilities Inventory is an excellent initial step in the community Visioning phase. The inventory will help you to focus on your community's current condition within the framework of the Community Development Plan's four core elements.





EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE ASSETS AND LIABILITIES,  
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CORE ELEMENTS

CORE ELEMENT	POSSIBLE ASSETS	POSSIBLE LIABILITIES
<i>HOUSING</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Historic homes</li> <li>• Elderly housing</li> <li>• Accessible housing</li> <li>• Cluster Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New development that is not affordable across a broad income range</li> <li>• New homes built on large lots</li> <li>• Deteriorated/vacant housing</li> </ul>
<i>OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Space*</li> <li>• Water supply+</li> <li>• Farmland</li> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Rivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contaminated former industrial land ("Brownfields")</li> <li>• Threatened water supply</li> <li>• New construction on formerly protected open space</li> </ul>
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuter rail stop</li> <li>• Bus and/or rapid transit</li> <li>• Access to highways</li> <li>• Employer shuttle buses</li> <li>• Park and Ride lots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown congestion</li> <li>• Bridges needing repair</li> <li>• Underutilized mass transit</li> <li>• Land use inconsistent with transportation objectives or existing infrastructure</li> </ul>
<i>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown business areas</li> <li>• Major employers</li> <li>• Industry</li> <li>• Village Centers</li> <li>• Usable Industrial and Commercial space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacant storefronts</li> <li>• Vacant factories</li> <li>• Car dependent locations</li> <li>• Improperly sited growth</li> <li>• Growth incompatible with community's character</li> <li>• Long commute to available jobs</li> </ul>

\* Specify whether protected or unprotected  
+ May be located in neighboring town

*Funding for the Visioning phase*

A community may select a consultant from the list of consultants (See Chapter E "Choosing a Consultant") provided by the RPA to act as a facilitator for this process or it may designate a local individual to serve as a facilitator. If it selects a consultant from the list, up to \$5000 of the community's designated funds may be used for Visioning and other preliminary planning activities.

Developing the community's Vision Statement

The Visioning process culminates in an overall community "Vision Statement." The Vision Statement should be a very brief document -- usually not more than one to two pages -- that expresses the community's priority goals and objectives for each of the four core elements of the Community Development Plan: housing, economic development, open space and resource protection, and transportation.

While the development of the Vision Statement may be guided by the community's Planning Committee, it will require participation from the full range of community stakeholders. If the community has not chosen a professional consultant to act as facilitator, refer to Appendix AA "Facilitation Techniques for the Visioning Process" for examples of facilitation techniques that should be helpful in developing the Vision Statement.

### Checking the reality of the Vision Statement

Once a community has gathered all relevant information, examined and understood the buildout map and analysis, and drafted a Vision Statement, it is time to check reality.

- Does the buildout analysis information and other data collected support the Vision Statement?
- Can the community realistically afford to reach the desired future?
- Is it feasible to accomplish the goals over the projected timeframe?

The DHCD website includes a "Growth Impact Handbook" <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/publications/impac2.pdf> designed to allow your community to examine its future. Data from your town accountant, which is filed each year with the Department of Revenue, will allow you to tailor your reality check with the actual relevant cost data.

Communities are strongly encouraged to work with professionals and volunteers in the community as they conduct the reality check. The results of the reality check should lead to identification of the gaps between the current plan and the desired future.

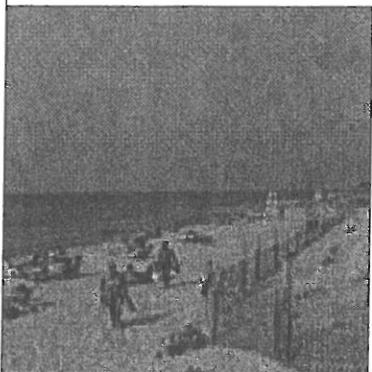
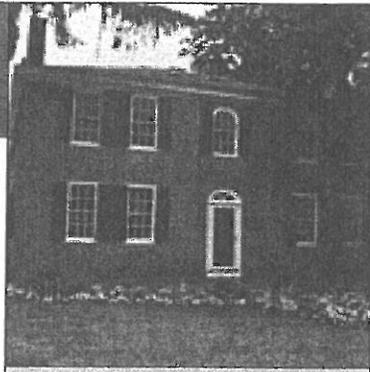
Review other local and regional planning documents to see if any of them have addressed the gaps you have identified. If one of the plans or studies does address the gaps, and the plan meets the criteria specified in Chapter D "Creating a Scope of Services", that plan can be submitted with the proposed Scope of Services for the Community Development Plan.

At the conclusion of the reality check process, the community should reexamine the Vision Statement, make any necessary changes, and include the statement in the CD Plan.

### *Participants in the Community Development Plan process*

*The list below identifies residents and organizations that can bring experience, perspective, and energy to the Community Development Plan process. In some communities, it may be useful to form subgroups working on specific issues relating to the four elements of the plan. In others a "core group" might be formed, and this group could then host forums, hold "open mike" sessions, and/or meet with established community organizations to encourage a greater level of participation by more residents. The list is not all-inclusive, and is intended only as a starting point.*

- *Municipal officials (e.g. Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Mayor)*
- *Housing advocates (continued on next page)*





*(continued from previous page)*

- Local/regional housing authority
- Elderly
- Young families
- Persons in poverty
- Middle-income families
- Civic organizations
- Religious community
- Local employers
- Builders
- Developers
- Community Development Corporations (CDCs)
- Realtors
- Human-service providers
- Municipal employees (public safety, teachers, highway department, etc.)
- High school and college students
- People from the workforce
- Seasonal residents
- Representatives from local and regional commercial and industrial interests
- Open space and resource protection advocates (Watershed Associations, Land Trusts, owners of significant tracts of land and environmental groups)

### Interlocal Cooperation

When neighboring towns work together during the planning process, everyone benefits. Funds can be pooled, interlocal needs can be addressed, and goals can be checked for compatibility. Cooperative planning is especially important with respect to several key areas. Many communities depend on water supplies beyond their own municipal boundaries. Water supply and protection concerns are major considerations in determining the immediate and long term impacts of development decisions.

For communities experiencing rapid growth, decisions regarding location of public facilities, infrastructure expansion, and transportation are likely to have direct or indirect impacts on neighboring cities and towns. For example, a group of communities may have a common need, such as public transportation for commuters.

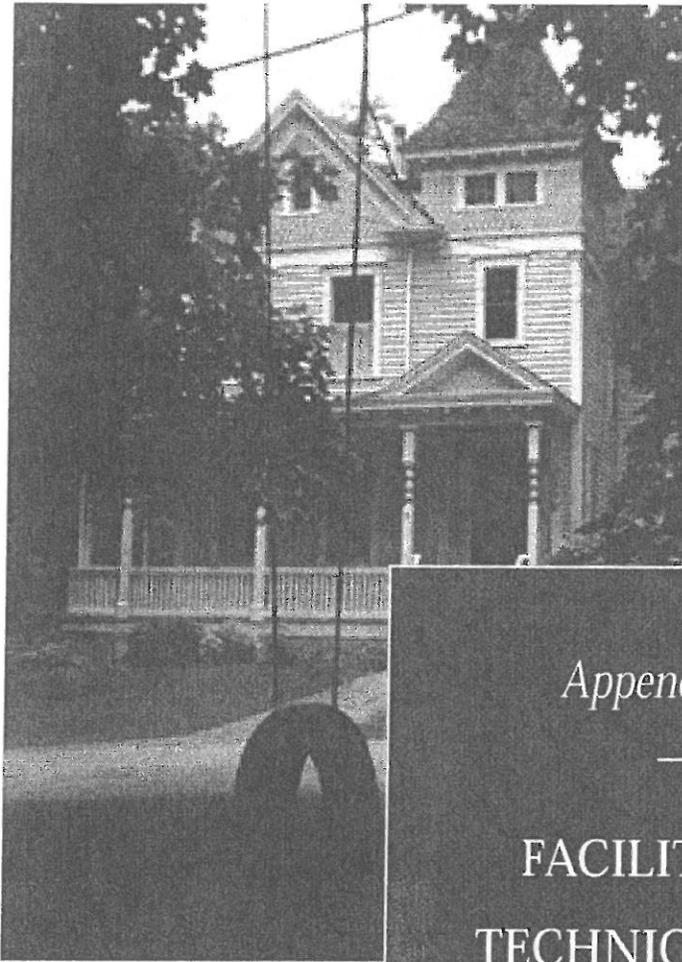
### Sample efforts

- Participating in a joint planning effort.
- Creating greenways and open space projects across boundaries.
- Extending sewer and water services across borders.
- Sharing services, equipment, and/or personnel.
- Participating in regional housing authority activities.
- Joint purchasing (i.e. fuel, school furniture, road salt, etc.)

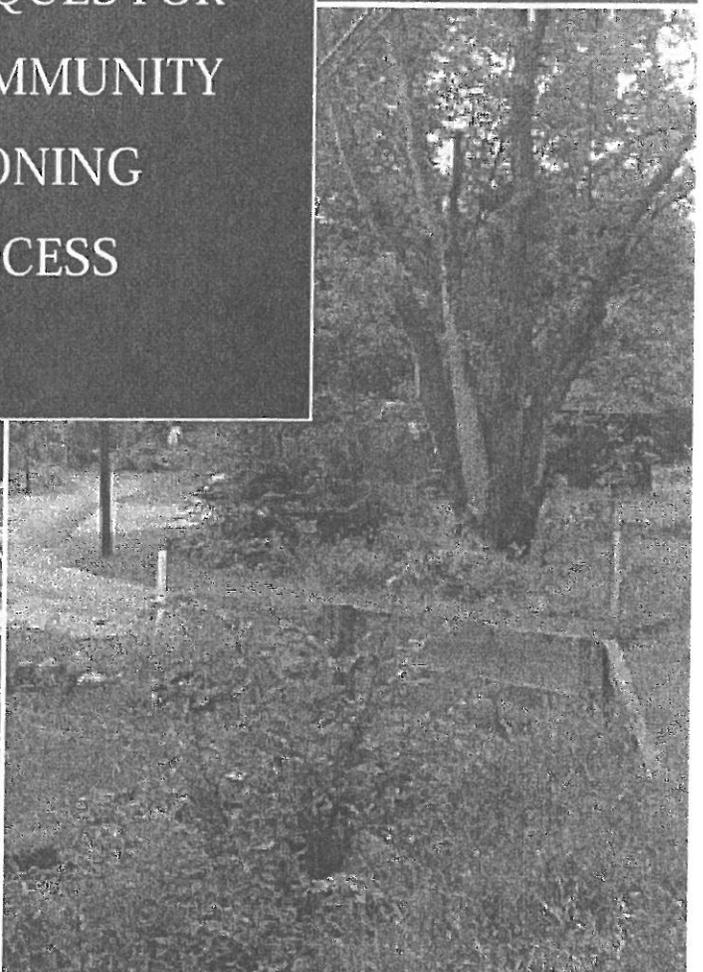
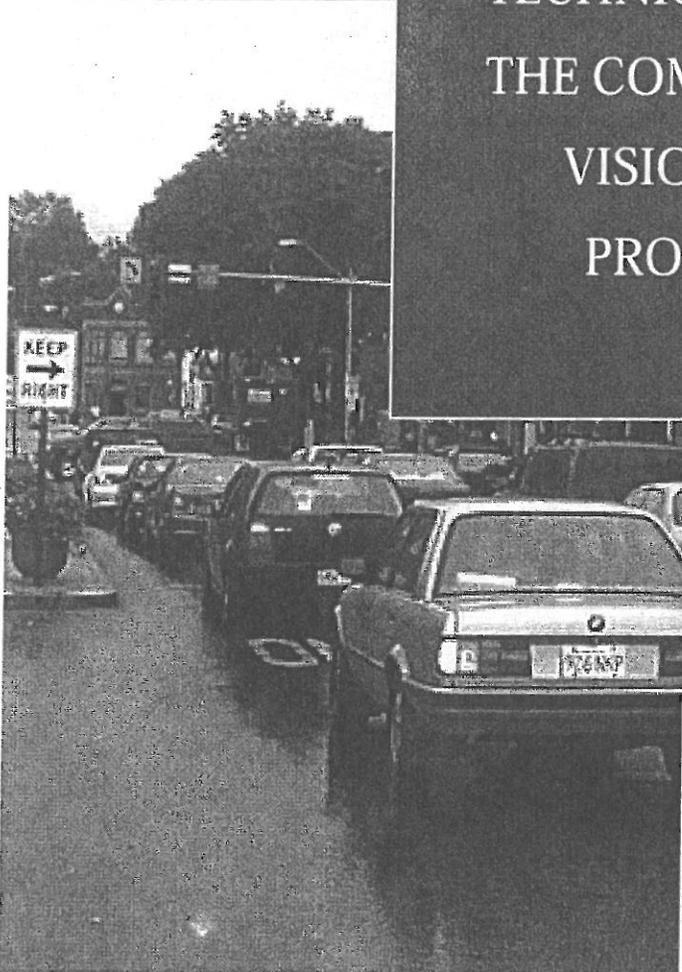
### Strategies

- Involve neighboring communities early and consistently
- Consider comments and plans of other jurisdictions
  - Be responsive to feedback.
- Use regional venues (e.g., RPAs, Watershed Associations, CDCs) to identify shared priorities and explore options for working together.





*Appendix AA:*  
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FACILITATION  
TECHNIQUES FOR  
THE COMMUNITY  
VISIONING  
PROCESS



## STAKEHOLDERS AND FACILITATORS

Community Visioning is a group decision-making process. In order to achieve popular support for the CD Plan, everyone who will be affected by it (the "stakeholders") should be invited to participate in the Visioning process. A hired or designated facilitator is essential to efficiently guide the process and keep it from bogging down.

Stakeholders can include:

- Municipal officials (e.g. Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Mayor).
- Residents across the full spectrum of age and income levels.
- Advocates in housing, the environment, economic development, and transportation.
- Members of civic organizations.
- Religious community.
- Local businesses.
- Developers and builders.
- Human and social service providers Community Development Corporations (CDCs), realtors, municipal employees (public safety, teachers, highway department, etc.).
- Seasonal residents.

The facilitator will:

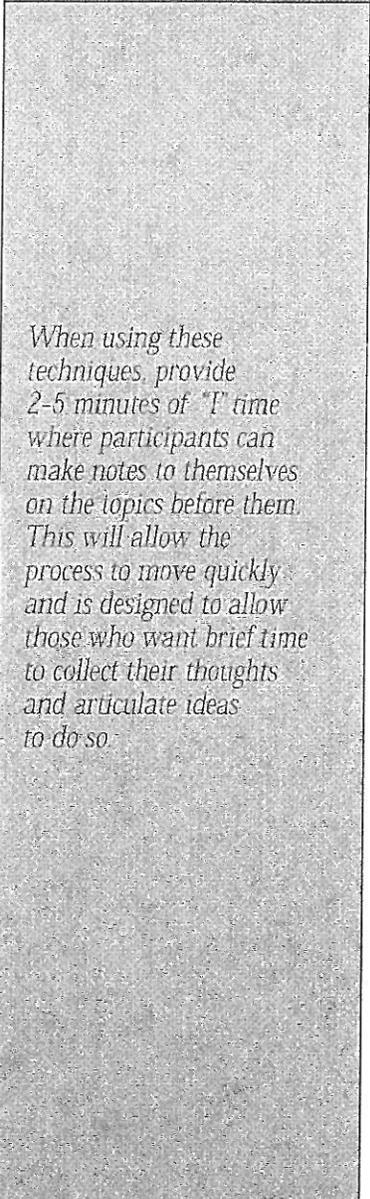
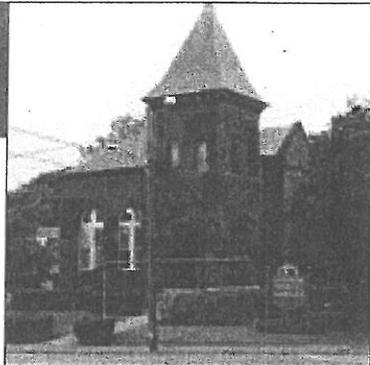
- Remain neutral in the discussion.
- Elicit participation from all members of the group.
- Guide the group through a series of questions.
- Manage the way information is presented.
- Periodically summarize what has been said.
- Keep the discussion focused.
- Listen for and help resolve what is unclear.
- Help the group draw inferences and conclusions from the ideas generated by the group.

## METHODS FOR SHARING INFORMATION AND IDEAS WITHIN THE GROUP

The first step in the Visioning process is developing a method for sharing information and ideas within the group. Such methods include brainstorming and charrettes.

Whatever process is selected, it should not be used as a forum for political debate, placing blame for past actions, individual posturing, or procrastinating. Rather it should be regarded as a first step toward collaboration, balance, progress and action for the coming years.

In Visioning, every idea offered by the stakeholders is worthy of consideration because all members are equally entitled to influence group outcomes. This process is most valuable when participants come with an open mind, a willingness to participate wholeheartedly, and a desire to contribute their time and energy to making this step in the planning process a success.



## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an effective tool for expanding the thinking of a group and for identifying dimensions of an issue. It is used to create as many ideas as possible in a short period of time.

Brainstorming can be either structured or unstructured. In the structured method, a round robin process is used where each group member in turn is asked for an idea. The process continues until everyone has "passed" and no additional ideas are offered. In the unstructured method, group members voice ideas in a random pattern. It is a less formal and more relaxed process. The difficulty is that the most vocal group members may dominate the process.

### Rules of brainstorming:

- Never criticize an idea - either in words or body language.
- Write down every idea on a flip chart or blackboard. This allows everyone to see the words and may generate other ideas. Put down the words as expressed by the speaker - don't interpret.
- There is no such thing as a foolish or stupid idea.
- It is okay to piggyback on other ideas or join ideas into a new statement.
- Do it quickly - 10 to 15 minutes works well although this time guideline is somewhat dependent upon the number of participants.

## Charrette

A charrette is an intensely focused work session to generate input from concerned citizens and officials. What distinguishes a charrette from brainstorming is that in a charrette, ideas are expressed visually through sketches, diagrams, and maps as well as through words. This means that architects and planners (either citizen volunteers or professional consultants) participate in the charrette, so that they can help the participants express their ideas in visual form.

The charrette can help to identify critical issues needing further in-depth analysis and to develop recommended strategies of action.

## Methods for determining priorities

The group participating in any one of these exercises can review a broad range of suggestions and identify priorities by using any of the following methods: nominal group technique, voting dots, and consensus. Such methods can be used individually, or (more often) in combination.

## Nominal Group Technique

This technique is useful for eliciting and clarifying opinions, and developing group recommendations. The nominal group technique can be used for a small group or for a larger group that is broken out into small groups.

*When using these techniques, provide 2-5 minutes of "T" time where participants can make notes to themselves on the topics before them. This will allow the process to move quickly and is designed to allow those who want brief time to collect their thoughts and articulate ideas to do so.*

Each small group is given the same question to address, and each has a facilitator. Participants begin by individually writing down responses to the question. As in brainstorming, participants go around the group, each person stating one item from his or her list, and going around repeatedly until all items have been covered. The rules of brainstorming apply as well.

The facilitator writes each item verbatim on a flip chart; the group holds off on discussion. Items are then discussed, clarified, and numbered. The ideas may be combined if the people presenting the comments agree. Using index cards -- one card for each item -- each participant writes down his or her top ten items, ranking them from 10 (top priority) to 1. The facilitator collects the cards and records the number of "votes" each item received. The group discusses the results and then each participant ranks the 10 highest-scoring items, using the same procedure as before. If more than one group is involved, each facilitator gives his or her group's results to the meeting coordinator.

As an alternative to shorten the process, the group may be asked to consider fewer than ten items. Divide the total number of items on the flip chart by two and add one to determine the number of items to be prioritized. For very long lists or a short time frame divide by three.

To combine the priority lists created by smaller groups, reassemble the large group, present the different priority lists, and vote to adopt one.

### Key issues:

- The nominal group technique elicits opinions that might otherwise go unvoiced, by giving participants equal time.
- This technique lets people with different backgrounds communicate their views and together clarify issues; however, this and other techniques that rely on writing and reading skills may marginalize people who lack these skills.
- Important issues may not make the final cut. (One possible solution might be to rank within but not across categories. Another solution might be for participants to rate all items as low, medium, or high priority using scores of 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The scores are then totaled for each item.)

### Voting Dots

An alternative or supplement to the nominal group technique, the "voting dots" method uses small, colorful adhesive dots available at school and office supply stores.

Large wall charts are posted listing the different items under consideration. All participants are given the same number of dots and told to vote for the items they think are the most important. They may choose to "spend" all their dots on one response, or they may spread them around. The items are then ranked according to the number of dots received. Discussion of the results may follow.

FACILITATION TECHNIQUES  
FOR THE VISIONING PROCESS

For very large groups, it may be necessary to break into smaller groups and run the process concurrently in several different rooms. The process occurs in the same manner, and the voting results are added together. Some validity is lost, however, because like items from the different groups are combined by the facilitators without the participants' input.

## Key issues:

- Participants need reasonably good reading skills for the voting procedure.
- Because the voting procedure is not anonymous, participants may feel pressure to vote for some responses over others.
- With a limited number of dots, people must make forced choices and a few dominant issues may receive most of the dots. To lessen this problem, people may be given several dots in different colors to use within different thematic categories, such as environment, housing, economic development, and transportation.

## Consensus

Consensus is an alternative to a voting process. With consensus there are no winners and no losers. Through discussion, the entire group reaches a point where participants are willing to allow something to go forward even if they do not enthusiastically support it.

The technique works best when a decision is under discussion. The group leader should ensure that every voice has been heard on the issue under consideration.

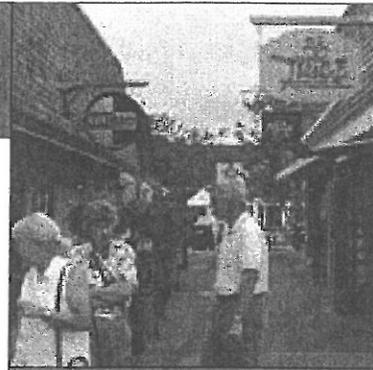
Each participant receives three file cards (red, green, and yellow). When ready to check consensus, the group leader asks each person to raise one of his/her cards to demonstrate where he/she is on the decision. Like a spotlight the colors indicate:

- Red: I do not agree and will block the decision.
- Yellow: I agree but I'm not really enthusiastic about the decision.
- Green: I can give an unqualified "yes" to the decision.

Participants are asked to keep their cards raised until everyone has viewed the display. If no red cards are displayed, then a general consensus has been achieved and no participants will block the decision. If a red card is shown, then more discussion is needed and other problem-solving activities such as listing pros and cons might help to move the decision forward.

## Key Issues

- Some groups that value consensus spend large amounts of time talking about an issue with no way to move forward.
- Use of the cards demonstrates when the group can move forward.
- Using this model, one individual can block consensus.

COMMUNITY  
PLANNING PROFILE*The Challenge:*

*A large 1960s commercial shopping center losing businesses to more modern facilities in other towns.*

*The Solution:*

*Join with private developers to convert the shopping center into a thriving mixed-use village center.*

*Twenty years ago, the population of Mashpee on Cape Cod was growing -- but the biggest commercial property in town was shabby and economically struggling. Rather than simply giving it a face-lift, the developer and the town worked together to create a new village center on the site, featuring residential units, retail shops and restaurants, offices, a public library, and a post office. Today Mashpee Commons is economically thriving, and because residents can walk from one area to another, car traffic is reduced.*

## Phase I: Getting Started

This chapter explains Phase I of the planning process – getting started. It describes how to begin and what should be considered in the development of a work plan. This is the initial planning work that needs to be done before embarking on the eight basic steps of the master planning process.

### Step A: Deciding to Plan and Commit Resources

#### 1. Recognize When It's Time to Plan

Your planning board has a duty and responsibility, as required by state law, to prepare and/or update the community's master plan. It is generally accepted by planning professionals that after five years most existing master plans could stand to be updated. However, if your plan is over seven years old and your city or town has experienced significant change, your community most likely needs a new plan ([click here for guidance about when you should update an existing plan](#)). There may also be pressing issues facing your community that need to be addressed, and preparing a new plan or updating your existing plan provides an opportunity to address them. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of your planning board to determine when it is time to prepare, amend, or update your master plan. Your board should be aware of this responsibility and of the importance of maintaining a viable plan.

#### 2. Seek Public Support

Do not assume that everyone within your community recognizes that preparing a master plan is necessary or desirable. While it is ideal to have public support, it is not required in order to proceed. Obviously, however, public support is important and strongly encouraged.



*A journey of a thousand miles  
begins with a single step. - Confucius*

One of the best ways to obtain public support is through education. This can be accomplished by reviewing the master planning requirements of the state statutes and explaining the benefits of planning (for guidance in this area, refer to the sections on Why Communities Plan and Why Should Your Community Want to Prepare a Master Plan in Chapter 9, “The Basics of Master Planning Theory”).

Ultimately, public support for the development of a master plan in a small town will be reflected by a vote of approval to proceed at town meeting, or at a public meeting of the planning board or board of selectmen. For larger towns and cities, this may not be necessary, as the commitment to proceed is strictly a decision of the planning board and/or the city council.

### 3. Prepare Cost Survey and Preliminary Budget

The master planning process begins when the planning board and elected officials in a community make the commitment to prepare a new master plan or update an existing plan and the townspeople vote to appropriate the funds. Typically, the planning board conducts an initial survey of expected costs and prepares a preliminary budget and timeline. The governing body then makes a recommendation that the town should vote to support it. As part of this process, the planning board must also determine how the plan should be prepared – by volunteers, by staff, by consultants, or by a combination of all three. Additionally the board should determine the type of master plan it wishes to prepare and what chapters should be included (refer to Chapter 3, “What Should Be Included in Your Master Plan,” as well as the section on Different Ways to Plan in Chapter 9, “The Basics of Planning Theory”).

### 4. Seek Budget Approval

In most small towns, funding for master plan development requires voter approval of a warrant article at town meeting. In large towns and cities, funding must be appropriated in the municipality’s annual budget. Some communities carry funds over, year to year, to build up a reserve account in an amount sufficient to undertake the project. Large cities often appropriate the necessary funding within the planning board’s or planning department’s budget. It is not uncommon for small towns to establish a master plan fund within their capital improvement program (CIP).

## **Step B: Preparing a Work Plan and Sharing It with Elected Officials and the Public**

Once the decision is made to proceed and the community votes to commit funding to the planning process, the planning board prepares a work plan that it shares with elected officials and the public. A work plan helps with organization and management of the planning process. It also helps in the development of a request for proposals (RFP) if a community finds that it needs consulting services.

Everyone has limited time and resources and needs to plan wisely how to use them. It is important to remember that (1) there may be other plans and planning studies already prepared, and (2) the master planning process in New Hampshire is governed by state laws and local codes. Accordingly, the initial preparation work requires a thorough understanding of past studies and of the state’s legal requirements. The action steps for developing a work plan are described in the following pages. A summary is also provided at the end of this section.

### **Action 1: Search Out and Examine Past Plans and Planning Studies**

Before setting out to prepare your plan, collect and examine past plans and planning studies that have been prepared for your community. It is possible that the same problems and issues that confront the community today were recognized as problems in the past, and that the recommendations and solutions for addressing those problems are still applicable today.

Take time also to review the current regional plans prepared by the regional planning commission and other regional planning studies and reports that might have a bearing on your community. These plans can provide a broad framework upon which to develop an effective local plan.

### **Action 2: Research Applicable State Laws and Your Local Codes**

This is an absolute necessity. This handbook contains the text of all the New Hampshire planning statutes (RSA 674:1 through 674:4) related to the preparation, adoption, and amendment of a master plan (**click for link to NH planning statutes found at: <http://nh.gov/oep/laws/index.htm>**). These statutes are:

- RSA 674:1 Duties of the Planning Board
- RSA 674:2 Master Plan; Purpose and Description
- RSA 674:3 Master Plan Preparation
- RSA 674:4 Master Plan Adoption and Amendment

### Action 3: Understand the Planning Process and the Different Types of Master Plans

It is absolutely essential to gain an understanding of the variety of ways that a master plan may be prepared. There is no one right way; there are several ways to plan and several types of master plans. What works best for one community may not be ideal for another. Every community is different and has its own specific needs. It is the responsibility of the planning board to determine what type of plan would be best for the community and how to go about preparing it.

The traditional approach to preparing a plan is the basic five-step process outlined by the NH OEP (see NH OEP Technical Bulletin 3, *Master Planning, Summer 2003*). The first step is community visioning. The second step is data collection and inventory. The third step is analysis and evaluation. The fourth step is plan preparation, including the evaluation of alternatives and the development of recommendations. The fifth and final step is implementation of the plan, which may include revisions to zoning ordinances or adoption of a capital improvement program. This traditional process is generally sequential, with each step begun only after the preceding step has been completed.

The contemporary approach is to bring citizens into the planning process early on, to identify key issues and to engage in discussions about the community's future through community visioning and other citizen participation techniques. The process continues with the bulk of the data collection and analysis targeted at key issues identified through the public dialogue. This process seeks to achieve consensus early on. It may seek approval of some implementation actions before other issues are even addressed. As a result, various issues are identified and addressed at different times while the plan is being prepared. It is a revolving, continuous process that does not appear to have a beginning or an end.

The continuous planning process has several advantages. People are actively engaged around high pri-

ority issues, without having to wait for data collection and analysis. Further, the continuous process uses implementation as both a learning experience and a reward mechanism. As people see things accomplished, they gain satisfaction and, as a result, are more likely to stay with the planning process.

The disadvantage is that this approach may lose one important characteristic of the master plan – the comprehensiveness that draws the connections between all the elements and policies in the plan. Some would argue that true comprehensiveness is never achieved. We live in a dynamic world with too much change ever to achieve a grand comprehensive linkage among all the parts.

The planning process will most likely be influenced by the type of professional assistance that is employed. Professional staff may end up following the revolving, continual process by necessity, since they are frequently interrupted by crises and the putting out of brush fires. A consultant, on the other hand, has a block of uninterrupted time that makes the traditional sequential process more realistic.

This is not to suggest that one planning process is better than the other, or that the characteristics of staff and consultants might not be reversed upon occasion.

It is important to be aware of the different types of master plans that can be prepared so that the best type of plan is selected for the community. There are five basic types of master plans: (1) the comprehensive master plan, (2) the small area master plan, (3) the functional master plan, (4) the strategic master plan, and (5) the abridged master plan (for more information about each type of plan, refer to the section *Different Ways to Plan* in Chapter 9, “The Basics of Planning Theory”).

While it is not an absolute requirement to select one type of master plan over another, it is helpful to have a certain type in mind. Because there are advantages and disadvantages associated with each type of plan, it is important to consider each one carefully and select the one that will be most suitable.

#### Action 4: Research and Determine the Contents of Your Plan

As part of the development of your work plan, it is essential to research and decide upon the contents – the types and number of sections to include in your plan. Other than the vision and land use sections, which are mandatory, there are thirteen other sections that can be included, ranging from regional concerns and smart growth to neighborhoods and community design (for a complete description of these sections and advice on what to include or not include in your plan, see Chapter 3, “What Should Be Included in Your Master Plan”).

#### Action 5: Research the Merits of Citizen Participation

Another important task is to educate the planning board about the merits of different types of citizen participation. Citizen participation is essential if the planning process is to be successful. An inability to achieve public consensus about the future of the community is often a fundamental reason why planning fails. To be successful, planning must reflect the needs and desires of the citizens who live and work in the community. Thus, one of the primary challenges facing a planning board involves developing an effective strategy for getting citizen input during the planning process.

Citizen participation is an emerging field. There are many models, which may or may not work, depending on the characteristics of the community and the nature of the issues it faces. A planning board can choose among a broad range of options when deciding on a citizen participation strategy. What is clear, however, is that the older models of the planning process – those that rely almost exclusively on experts – do not work. Success depends on the members of the planning board and other community leaders whose knowledge and political skills are essential. There are certain roles in the planning process that only you can do.

One older model of the planning process is drawn from the design professions. A planning consultant is hired to prepare a plan for the community in the same

way that an architect is hired to design a building. After some preliminary meetings and input from the client, the planner retreats to the office and prepares “the plan.” Then, at a public hearing, it is revealed. After its acceptance, the plan is ultimately forgotten.

***The Lesson to Be Learned:** When there are no planning roles for those who must implement the plan, it typically ends up on a shelf, collecting dust.*

With this in mind, the most effective citizen participation strategies involve the public and elected officials at the very beginning of the process. Citizens can be recruited to serve on an ad hoc task force or citizen advisory committee charged with completing a particular section of the master plan. This particular strategy has enjoyed broad support because of its simplicity and ability to deliver quality citizen input.

Another citizen involvement technique is the community survey (for more information, see Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques”). **Click here for examples.** Depending upon the methodology used, a community survey has the potential of reaching a large number of citizens. This can yield a tremendous amount of input and opinions on a broad range of issues being studied by the planning board.

Still another widely used technique involves the planning board working directly with specialized groups or target audiences, such as farmers, developers, environmentalists, or small-business owners. By grouping persons with like interests, a planning board can capitalize on their accumulated knowledge and perspective. In some cases, this form of citizen participation is essential because of the influential nature of the target audience or special interest group within the community.

Planning boards can also reach out to the public in new, innovative ways. For example, the use of two-way interactive television is gaining popularity. Airtime can often be secured as a public service, at little or no cost to the community. As more people find it difficult to attend meetings, two-way interactive television may well become the preferred medium for citizen involvement in the future.

The charrette, long a mainstay of design professionals as an idea generator, is also gaining acceptance as a citizen participation strategy. Highly interactive and participatory, a charrette can be designed to present citizens with a real world view of planning and the choices their community must make when deciding about future growth and development. The PLAN NH charrette has become a very popular and effective program for communities (see <http://www.plannh.com/>). It brings experienced design professionals to a community at little or no cost, to produce a plan of action that deals with a particular design issue or concern. The community design charrette is typically held over a weekend and begins with a walking tour of the site in question.

At the other end of the spectrum is an inclusive public participatory process, often called community visioning (for more information, see Chapter 5, “Phase II: Community Visioning,” as well as Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques”). As a prelude to the traditional master planning process, a growing number of communities are engaging their citizens in a structured visioning process. In most cases, the process is designed to provide answers to such key questions as where the community is headed, what values its citizens find most important, and what kind of future they hope to create. As with a charrette, a visioning forum has the potential to produce a tremendous amount of information, as well as civic energy and spirit.

The visioning process also goes to great lengths to achieve consensus and to build public support. A number of good sources are available on this subject, and the American Planning Association has produced a video on community visioning called “Building Vision and Action” (see Chapter 12, Bibliography/Resources). Another good source is the publication called “Swamp Yankee Planning” by Philip Herr, a former M.I.T. planning professor. This twenty-five-page publication is not about swamps or even Yankees, as the title suggests, but about the inherent good sense of community residents and how they need to be involved in the planning process. It is particularly enlightening on the structure and preparatory steps necessary to have a successful participatory process.

Philip Herr and other planners often point out the need to broaden participation beyond the usual city or town hall “regulars.” There are various techniques for doing this, such as citizen surveys by mail or telephone; use of local press and cable television; task forces; visioning sessions; use of facilitators and mediators; focus groups; and a variety of neighborhood, civic, religious, cultural, and fraternal organizations. Even teenagers can participate (see also Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques”). More extensive participation (beyond that of the usual insiders) is intended to educate the public about local government issues, to generate fresh ideas about old problems, and to improve the political climate by increasing trust. These citizen participation techniques concentrate on finding out what citizens like and dislike. Planning board members listen and attempt to find consensus rather than try to sell a particular proposal.

All citizen participation efforts take time, money, and know-how. They should not be done in a superficial or half-hearted way because they can raise expectations beyond the ability to deliver. That will result in greater cynicism about local government.

### **Action 6: Develop a Budget and Timeline**

As the work plan is prepared, a timeline identifying project milestones and priorities must be developed. Think about this process as budgeting; after you have developed an estimate of the time needed to prepare your plan, triple it. It always takes longer to prepare a master plan than one thinks. An actual budget will also need to be prepared.

### **Action 7: Set Aside Equal Time at Planning Board Meetings**

A planning board can not spend the same amount and kind of time on site plans, subdivisions, and other regulatory matters and get much accomplished on a master plan. There are two principle points to remember about time management. First, a planning board needs to spend equal time on both applications and planning. This can be done, in most cases, without dramatically increasing the number or length of meetings, by establishing time limits within meetings.

Second, greater discipline can be brought to the application process. Planning boards can require that developers provide complete and correct plans. Otherwise their applications can be considered incomplete and returned.

### Action 8: Research Basic Background Data about Your Community

In order to plan for the future, a planning board needs to understand the community's past and present. The collection and analysis of background information is an essential early step in the plan development process. Typically, a planning board will conduct studies or gather information about the community's demographics, natural environment, economic base, housing stock, transportation systems, community facilities, and land use. The planning board will then be in a position to analyze trends and draw conclusions about the community.

It is important to note that citizen board members can begin to research some of the basic data needed for the plan. This can be done by assigning each planning board member the task of researching one topic and then presenting her or his findings to the board. If your community has an existing master plan, each planning board member can also be assigned a section or chapter of that plan to review.

The regional planning commission can provide population projections and basic housing studies. The town's annual report may have data on housing construction, or the building inspector can provide this information.

***Helpful Hint:** Some, or most, of this basic research can be assigned to a master plan advisory committee (see action step 10). However, the planning board still must have a good understanding of the demographic, housing, and economic conditions, along with other trends, in the community.*

### Action 9: Understand the Role of Policies, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Whether one is preparing a master plan from

scratch or updating an existing plan, it is important to find, record, and evaluate the community's existing policies, however obscure. Prior and current plans, planning documents, zoning and subdivision ordinances, and site plan regulations are important sources of information. Rarely are the policies summarized all in one place, except perhaps in the master plan. A municipality is likely to have many more policies than is commonly realized.

A policy is generally defined as a statement expressing an adopted position. It sets forth a definite course of action to guide and determine present and future decisions.

Another important consideration in plan development involves the prediction of future conditions in the community. When findings are generated as a result of background studies, the plan will begin to reflect an orientation toward the future. In most cases, this orientation will be represented in the plan's vision and goal statements which, when implemented, will bring the plan to life.

The challenge of articulating a community's future through words should not be trivialized. For example, there might be agreement on the overall goal of "improving our community," but no agreement on how this will be done. Planning board members must ask themselves whether such a goal carries any real meaning with it. In recognition of the critical role words play in planning, it is important that planning board members and other community officials understand the differences between goals, objectives, and strategies.

- A **goal** is a general statement of a future condition considered desirable for the community; it is an end towards which actions are aimed.
- An **objective** is a statement of a measurable activity to be accomplished in pursuit of the goal; it refers to an aspiration that is reasonably attainable.
- A **strategy** is a specific proposal to do something that relates directly to accomplishing the objective; it identifies the how, the where, and the amount to be done.

As past and current policies are researched, it would be equally wise to find and record all of the community's past and current goals, objectives, and strategies and compare them, looking for similarities and differences.

### **Action 10: Establish a Master Plan Advisory Committee (Optional)**

It is critical that the planning board involve a wide cross section of boards, committees, and departments in the master planning process. Planning involves a number of fields and stretches across a variety of local government activities.

The technique most commonly used is to appoint a master plan advisory or steering committee to guide the master planning process. Generally, it should include all or most members of the planning board, representatives of other boards and committees, department heads, and elected officials, as well as members of the public. The size of the committee should be kept in mind, too. The larger the committee, the more work it will take to manage it.

As a rule, the planning board chair will seek nominations and appoint committee members. Ideally, the master plan advisory committee should consist of key representatives from the following boards, commissions, and departments:

- the planning board
- elected officials (board of selectmen, town or city council, the mayor)
- the city manager or town administrator
- department heads (fire and police chiefs, building inspectors, and heads of the departments of public works, parks and recreation, and health)
- the superintendent of schools and school board
- the conservation commission
- the zoning board of adjustment
- the historic commission (if available)
- the economic development council (if available)
- the parks and recreation commission (if available)

- the budget committee
- the regional planning commission\*
- local citizens
- town or staff planners (if available)\*

*\*Regional planning commissions, staff, and town planners should be classified as resource personnel and not as voting members of the committee.*

## **Step C: Ensuring That Your Resources Are in Place**

### **1. Double-check Funding Sources and Staff/Volunteer Commitments**

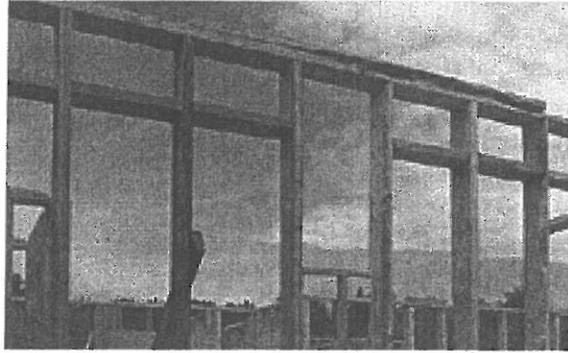
When the work plan has been accepted, the next step is to make sure that resources, funding, staff, volunteers, consultants (if needed), and equipment are in place. This includes working with the town planner and/or finance department or town administrator to verify funding and to make sure that all necessary contracts for professional services have been properly secured. Also verify that volunteers are committed to the process and ready to participate.

The existence of planning staff and equipment will vary from town to town. Some communities employ a professional town planner or planning staff, who may have the time to facilitate and direct the master plan preparation process. However, for the majority of small towns in New Hampshire, a town planner does not exist. Therefore, it becomes the job of the planning board to organize and facilitate the master planning process.

The main equipment needed includes a facility where people can meet, a computer, a telephone, and mapping capabilities. Today, geographic information systems (GIS) provide the bulk of the mapping work required for most master planning efforts. If the community does not have GIS capabilities, often these services can be provided by the regional planning commission or by a consultant for a fee. Knowledgeable volunteers within your community who have GIS experience may be willing to donate their time and expertise as a service to the community.

2. Have the Master Plan Advisory Committee Review the Work Plan (Optional)

Once the work plan has been completed, the master plan advisory committee can review it with volunteers, staff, and/or consultants working with the community. Responsibilities can then be assigned, including organizing the community visioning process and preparing the community assessment, described in the following chapters.



### Summary of Action Steps for Developing Your Work Plan

- Action 1: Search out and examine past plans and planning studies prepared for your community, as well as current regional plans, such as the housing needs assessment, the transportation improvement program (TIP), and other regional transportation plans prepared by your regional planning commission that may have a bearing on your community.
- Action 2: Research all applicable state laws and local codes related to the preparation, adoption, and amendment of a master plan.
- Action 3: Gain an understanding of the planning process and the different types of master plans, and select a type of plan to prepare (see the master planning worksheet for guidance).
- Action 4: Begin research to determine the contents of your plan, such as the types and number of chapters needed (see Chapter 3 of the handbook).
- Action 5: Research and educate the planning board about the merits and types of citizen participation. Seek wide public involvement and the involvement of elected officials, staff, and other boards and commissions in the planning process.
- Action 6: Develop a budget and timeline for preparing the plan. Once the timeline has been completed, triple it.
- Action 7: Set aside equal time at planning board meetings to address master planning agenda topics as well as regulatory matters.
- Action 8: Begin to research basic background data about your community (see Chapter 6 of the handbook for guidance).
- Action 9: Understand the role of policies, goals, objectives, and strategies. Search out and examine all of your community's policies and find and compare past and current goals, objectives, and strategies.
- Action 10: Appoint a master plan advisory committee (optional).

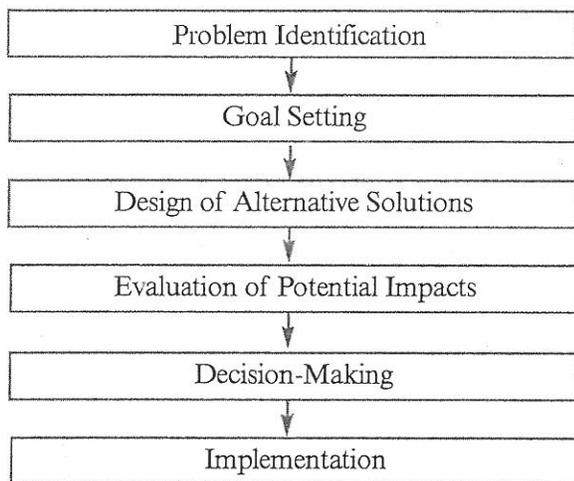
# Basics of Planning Theory

## What Is Planning?

Everybody plans – we all make financial plans, travel plans, and work plans to help us achieve personal goals and objectives. Organizations and firms plan for strategic reasons and to gain a competitive edge. Plans help us to organize our time and to work toward our goals in a step-by-step fashion.

Planning is a widely used process that typically includes the steps below.

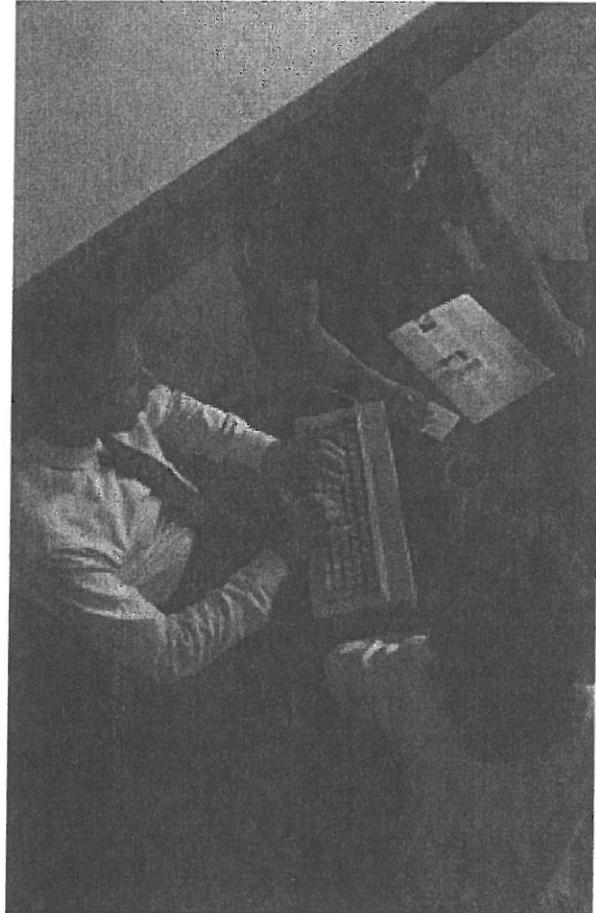
### The Planning Process



People from all walks of life, and communities as well, use this method to prepare for the future, solve problems, clarify needs and objectives, set priorities, and achieve goals. Here are two definitions of community planning.

*Planning is a process of preparing in advance, and in a reasonably systematic fashion, recommendations for programs and courses of action to attain the common objectives of the community.* – (Anthony Catanese)

*We define planning as a process for determining appropriate future action through a sequence of choices.* – (Davidoff & Reiner, A Choice Theory of



Planning, Journal of American Planning Association, 1962)

Professional planners use the planning process as a procedure to address a broad range of issues in a pragmatic, impartial, and rational way.

A planner may use the planning process when addressing a single subject or a wide range of subjects, such as capital improvements, housing, or transportation. Comprehensive planning covers a wide range of interrelated topics that are of concern to the community. Documents that result from this process are called comprehensive plans, general plans, or master plans.

Community volunteers and planning board members can employ the same planning process that professional planners use. As the definitions above suggest, when communities engage in planning, they seek answers to such fundamentally important questions as

- What are the common goals and objectives of my community?
- What might happen to my community in the future?
- What do we want to happen?
- How best can we achieve the future outcome we desire?

## Why Do Communities Plan?

Communities plan in order to improve the quality of public choices and decisions. Some communities do not plan until they encounter a crisis that demands an immediate public decision; then they hastily construct their plans after considering only a limited number of actions.

Having a master plan is worthwhile for the following reasons:

1. Planning is a means of preparing for the future. Planning enables us to look before we leap and avoid costly and sometimes embarrassing mistakes. Through planning, we come to understand what must be done now and in the future to achieve our goals.
2. Planning makes sense. For a community, planning involves working together to balance competing interests. Planning also forces people to think and organize their time, resources, and efforts.
3. Planning helps the community recognize its priorities. With a master plan, local officials can address the most urgent needs first.
4. Planning is intended to serve the public interest. Planning does not attempt to stop or replace market forces of supply, demand, and price, but to guide those forces by establishing rules for development and growth.

5. Planning helps the community set sound policies for development. A master plan makes it easier for private developers and builders to respect and understand community desires and public policies as they develop their individual projects.

6. Planning helps identify both the positive and negative aspects of a community. What is good should be protected; what is bad should be changed; what is possible should be done.

7. Planning helps to maintain a satisfactory quality of life. In towns with a decreasing population, planning may offer ways to maintain a positive quality of life and revitalize the community. In growing communities, planning offers a way to protect and, if possible, enhance the quality of life.

8. The planning process is a means of educating people about their community. Developing a master plan provides an opportunity for public participation in the decision-making process.

As suggested in *Planner on a Disc*, there are a number of practical reasons why communities should prepare a master plan or update an existing plan. Here is an abridged version of some of those reasons.

- to ensure that growth and development is orderly and predictable
- to save taxpayers money by avoiding premature development and costly sprawl
- to plan efficiently for capital improvements
- to circumvent frivolous legal challenges and law suits by minimizing their likelihood
- to provide greater certainty to property owners and developers regarding what to expect with regard to growth and development
- to protect environmental resources and aesthetic qualities
- to strengthen local identity
- to ensure that basic infrastructure and public facilities and services will keep pace with new development
- to make local decision-making more open and democratic
- to ensure fairness and avoid favoritism
- to ensure that development meets local needs

## Why Should Your Community Want to Prepare a Master Plan?

A master planning effort should be undertaken only when the community understands the purpose, needs, and benefits of planning. As stated in *Planner on a Disc*, a master plan should be

- descriptive in articulating the desires of the community into a vision statement
- productive in setting forth goals and objectives for the community's future
- part of a continuous planning process that is timely and responsive to the needs and desires of the community
- prescriptive in defining the legal basis for land use regulations and a capital improvement program

## How Much Will It Cost to Prepare a Master Plan?

Unfortunately, master plans cost money. If your town or city is unwilling to spend money preparing a plan, then it will probably be difficult to prepare one. The amount of money required can vary considerably, depending on the type of plan you prepare and the nature and duration of the planning process you follow.

One way to estimate how much you should budget is to evaluate the plans that neighboring, or other similar-sized communities, have recently prepared and then find out how much each of those communities spent on preparing its plan. Another approach is to ask a planning consultant or your regional planning commission to give you a rough estimate. This estimate can then be refined based on what you decide to include in your plan.

Most planning consultants charge in the range of \$50 to \$100 an hour, depending upon their level of expertise and how far they have to travel to reach your community. Determining the number of hours can be difficult. Unfortunately, there is no generalized rule of thumb to estimate the cost, which could vary anywhere from \$30,000 to \$50,000 to prepare a new master plan for a community with a population

of under 10,000, and \$50,000 to \$100,000 for a large municipality.

As described in *Planner on a Disc*, some of the factors that affect the cost of preparing a master plan are as follows:

- the amount of citizen participation and the number of community and/or neighborhood meetings and events held during the planning process
- the level of agreement or disagreement in the community (that is, how fragmented or divided the community is on key issues)
- the geographic specificity you want your plan to achieve, and the amount of work that needs to be done to prepare digitized maps and upgrade GIS to that level
- the extent to which newsletters and mailings are used to keep citizens informed and involved in the planning process
- the amount of effort put into different methods of disseminating information to the citizens at all stages of the planning process, and the number of different methods employed
- the extent to which the community uses computer technology to increase citizen involvement in the planning process (by creating an interactive webpage and/or making use of email)
- the nature and content of the final plan – how comprehensive it is and the level of detail required
- the form in which the plan is published, the number of copies of different versions (full versions and executive summaries), whether it contains color maps and photographs, and whether copies of the plan are given away or whether a fee is charged
- the length of time allotted to the planning process

As the above list suggests, many of the factors that affect the ultimate cost of preparing a master plan are directly or indirectly related to the amount of time and effort expended in involving citizens in the planning process, in keeping people informed, and in making sure that important policy decisions and choices are publicly and openly discussed. Thus, there are very real risks in trying to prepare “cheap” master plans. The less money you budget for the important task of involving and informing citizens, the greater the risk that you will end up preparing a plan that lacks broad-based public support.

**Helpful Hint:** Before determining your budget, first decide on the contents of the plan, the type of master plan you would like to prepare, and what planning approach would work best for your community. (For information about what should be included, the different types of master plans, and the various approaches to planning see Chapter 3, "What Should Be Included in Your Master Plan," and the section on Different Ways to Plan within this chapter.)

## How Long Will It Take to Prepare a Master Plan?

The type of master plan you prepare and the amount of data you collect will have a direct bearing on the length of the planning process. Comprehensive master plans typically take much longer to prepare than plans that focus on a limited number of key issues or that pertain only to a limited part of your community. Some communities have taken three or more years to prepare a comprehensive plan; others have succeeded in preparing comprehensive master plans in six months to a year.

As stated in *Planner on a Disc*, when thinking about how long the planning process will take, keep in mind that the length of time it takes to prepare a plan can be affected by

- the geographic size and diversity of your municipality
- the complexity of the land use and development issues your community faces
- the degree of agreement or disagreement within your community regarding pressing problems, priorities, and possible courses of action
- your community's track record or degree of past success in plan-making
- the degree to which local elected officials understand and support the need for planning
- the extent to which local citizens feel that local government representatives and local government boards and commissions understand their concerns and represent their interests

Once work has begun, there is a tendency for the people involved to feel that it is imperative to get the

plan finished as quickly as possible. Often this feeling of urgency is based on a fear of what might happen in the interim, while the plan is being prepared. The desire to complete the plan quickly can also be motivated by a desire to reduce the cost. But if you make the planning process too short, you may undermine public support for the plan in the long run.

**Helpful Hint:** Take as much time as needed to prepare your master plan, so that everyone can be proud of it and it has broad-based public support. But don't take so long that you lose momentum. (For more information about the different types of master plans and the various approaches to preparing your plan, refer to the section on Different Ways to Plan within this chapter.)

## Is Hiring a Professional Planning Consultant Necessary?

You may assume that a master plan can only be prepared by a professional planner. Professional planners have a great deal to contribute to the planning process. But the planning process is essentially a process of translating community values into public policy for the future. You can't hire someone to do that for you.

Planning board members, whether elected or appointed, are important political leaders in their community. Working in conjunction with the political leaders on other boards and committees, they can articulate the community's values and recommend policy. There is a lot you can accomplish, and have the responsibility to accomplish, without deferring to professional planners.

In contemporary thinking, a community does not hire a professional planner to "prepare a plan for us." The professional planner, whether a hired consultant or public staff, should assist the leadership of the community in identifying common goals and policies. It would be presumptuous for a planner to state what they are. Whether you have a planner to work with or not, community goals and policies are uniquely in the province of the planning board.

The strengths of professional planners are best utilized during the steps that occur before and after the plan formulation – in technical analysis and techniques for implementing the master plan. They can perform a number of studies that identify trends affecting your community; and the professional planner is particularly skilled in the implementation stage – identifying ways to carry out goals and policies. The planner can also point out the potential implications of various alternatives. In the formulation of the master plan, the professional planner is best seen as a resource for policy makers. Professional planners are skillful at outlining citizen participation techniques, translating expressions of community values into goals and policies, and the technical draftsmanship of policies in the plan.

If you want to produce an effective master plan, it makes sense to hire and make use of professional planning assistance. Even cities and towns that have full-time planners often seek assistance from professional planning consultants or the local regional planning commission in carrying out much of the related work. There are a number of reasons to do so.

First, planners employed by the community have a responsibility to administer and defend existing land use regulations. It can be difficult to perform that duty and, at the same time, propose a different set of regulations.

Second, when making major policy decisions in the future, it may be necessary for citizens and elected officials to face up to some hard choices. An independent, outside planning consultant is in the best position to objectively frame and put controversial policy choices before the community without the interference of political pressures.

Last but not least, hiring an outside planning consultant is a way to introduce fresh perspectives and viewpoints into the planning process.

Nevertheless, local staff planners should, and can, play important roles in the process of preparing a plan, and in managing and overseeing the work of a planning consultant. If you have a full-time city or town planner and choose to hire an outside planning consultant, be sure to ask your planner to play a

major role in drafting the scope of services for the planning consultant and to participate in the planning process.

## Some Helpful Hints in Preparing Your Plan

As identified by the planners who prepared *Planner on a Disc*, below are a number of helpful hints to keep in mind as you proceed.

- Developing a plan is not easy, but it can be fun.
- Preparing a plan for the future requires leadership and risk-taking.
- Planning is controversial – but so is *not* planning.
- People find it easier to say what they are *against* than what they are *for*.
- Having a zoning ordinance is not the same as having a plan. Zoning is a tool that helps implement the plan. Your plan tells why particular zoning provisions are necessary and justified, and why they serve a public purpose. Having a plan helps a community defend its zoning ordinance when and if specific zoning provisions are challenged in court.
- People who speak the loudest and are most vociferous in calling attention to their views are not necessarily representative of the community as a whole. Make sure you devise a planning process that draws out the views of a cross section of citizens.
- Striking the right balance and charting a middle course is difficult, but possible. Look for “win-win” solutions.
- Intergovernmental communication and cooperation is essential in achieving land use planning objectives. Consult and seek the advice of neighboring communities before adopting plans and policies that may have an effect on those communities. If you do, then you have reason to hope and expect that they will do the same when and if they consider plans and policies that may have an effect on *your* community.
- Planning needs to be ongoing to be successful. You can’t just prepare a plan and then forget about it. For a plan to be effective, it needs to be referred to and used as the basis for making land use and development decisions.
- Revisit the plan from time to time and be sure to evaluate how it is working.

- Don't allow your plan to become obsolete or ineffective. If it isn't working as intended, change it! If, after a certain length of time, parts of the plan are no longer current, revise and update those portions. Don't allow the validity of an entire plan to be undermined by allowing a portion of the plan to become obsolete.

### When Should You Update an Existing Plan?

Most communities in New Hampshire have some form of an adopted plan. Whether it is an older comprehensive plan or a relatively new master plan, it does not really matter so long as it is being used and implemented. If your plan is not being used, you should find out why and proceed to update it or replace it with a new plan.

Most planners agree that, if an existing plan is well over seven years old and significant changes have occurred since it was prepared, your community may need a completely new plan. However, if your existing master plan is about five years old, it may only need to be revised or updated. It is usually less expensive and less time-consuming to update an existing plan than it is to prepare a new plan.

In fact, it is highly recommended that all master plans be updated every five years. In some cases, all that may be required is an updating of relevant data and information, findings, and recommendations. The overall goals of the plan and the visions for the community may still be relevant. If your existing master plan is in a loose-leaf binder or in electronic format, the updating process can be easily accomplished without the expense of printing a new plan.

Daniels, Keller, and Lapping in the *Small Town Planning Handbook* (APA Press 1995), prepared the following checklist (on page 92) to help communities decide when it is necessary to update an existing plan. If your community meets these guidelines, do not wait too long to begin the process of updating your plan.

### Different Ways to Plan

Although the purpose and intent of planning is fairly simple to understand, there are many different ways to approach the task of preparing a master plan. Before you decide which chapters to include in your plan, you will need to ask: (1) Which planning approach should I follow? and (2) What type of master plan should I prepare? How you answer the first question will determine how you proceed with the next. The type of master plan that you prepare is directly related to the planning approach you employ.

### The Various Approaches to Planning

While there is no one right way to plan, there are several ways to do it and several types of plans that you can prepare. One aim of this handbook is to help you decide which planning approach and what type of plan would be best for you. There are five generally accepted approaches to planning.

1. Comprehensive planning
2. Issue-oriented planning
3. Functional planning
4. Strategic planning
5. Vision-based planning

It is best to select an approach and stay with it as you prepare your master plan. However, if you find that that approach is not working, for whatever reason, there is no reason why you cannot stop and change direction. Moreover, you may find that a combination of approaches is more useful than just one. Perhaps you need to be comprehensive in your scope, but more visionary or strategic in your goals and policies. Flexibility in planning is important and often necessary. Equally important is preparing the best and most successful plan possible for your community (see chart on page 102).

### When Is It Necessary to Update an Existing Master Plan?

1. Your existing plan is more than five years old.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
2. Your town's public services are no longer able to meet current and projected future needs.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
3. Your existing plan does not contain an economic development chapter.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
4. Your existing plan does not address current and future housing needs.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
5. Your existing plan does not discuss community water quality and supply needs and sewage and solid waste disposal.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
6. Your map of existing land uses is not up to date.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
7. Your zoning map does not agree with your map of desired future land uses.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
8. Your zoning ordinance is no longer consistent with the goals and objectives of your plan.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
9. Your existing plan lacks an inventory of environmental features, such as natural areas, wildlife habitats, prime agricultural land, wetlands, natural hazards, and areas with development limitations.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_
10. Your plan lacks any maps of community facilities and service areas.  
True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_

If you answered "true" to a majority of the above questions, it is likely that you need to update your existing plan.

#### 1. Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive planning is the traditional approach to town planning. It covers

- a broad range of topics
- a wide geographic area
- a long time span

Comprehensive planning follows the traditional four-step planning process: the identification of problems and issues; the establishment of goals and objectives; data collection and analysis; and plan

preparation and implementation (see Chapter 2, "The Master Planning Process," and NH OEP Technical Bulletin 3, *Formulating the Master Plan*, Summer 2003).

The distinguishing features of comprehensive planning are that it covers a wide range of topics, is ambitious in requiring numerous studies that take time to complete, and is long range in scope (typically covering a 10- to 20-year period). (For more information about comprehensive planning, refer to the reports and publications identified in Chapter 12, "Bibliography/Resources.")

## 2. Issue-Oriented Planning

Some communities do not get around to planning until a problem or a crisis has occurred. Issue-oriented planning focuses attention on the problems and issues of greatest concern to a community at a particular point in time. This is an “old-fashioned approach” to planning, in that it is designed to identify and address narrowly defined, specific community problems and issues above all else.

### What Is Involved?

Community members are brought together to identify and prioritize the pressing issues facing the community. There are many ways to bring people together (refer to Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques,” for a variety of citizen participation examples). Once the issues have been identified, you develop first a process to rank them and then a plan to address the most pressing issues.

### Advantages of This Approach

This is the classic approach to defining the scope and contents of a master plan; the reasons to plan are well-documented. People are more naturally inclined to support a community effort that addresses pressing issues than they are a top-down approach that imposes a process upon the community.

### Does This Approach Make Sense in Your Community?

An issue-oriented approach to planning makes the most sense for a community that has a pressing land use issue or problem, and when there is broad agreement within the community that the problem needs to be addressed. This approach is also effective for communities that have little or no prior experience in developing a plan. By focusing on a particular issue, the community increases the likelihood of succeeding with its planning effort.

## 3. Functional Planning

It is not necessary to produce all of the chapters in a master plan at one time. What is important is that you make progress in addressing the important issues and choices facing your community. Perhaps

one or two topic areas are more important in your community right now than others. For example, a lot of energy these days is being directed towards addressing transportation concerns. Perhaps there is pending a well-publicized transportation improvement, a new highway or bypass, or a parking garage that will take up precious space downtown. If this is the case, it might make sense to address and complete 1 or 2 chapters of your plan first, and other chapters later on. This can be accomplished through functional planning. In many ways, functional planning is a slower version of comprehensive planning.

### Is This Approach Right for You?

This approach might be right for your community if one or two issues are of pressing concern or if there is a lack of support on the part of the local leadership for comprehensive planning. It might also be a viable option if there are insufficient funds to permit the completion of a comprehensive plan.

## 4. Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is defined as “a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it” (Bryson, p. xii and p. 5). It has also been defined as “the process of the development of strategies for the accomplishment of specified goals and objectives with respect to a set of issues” (Kaufman and Jacobs).

There appears to be no widely accepted definition of strategic planning as it is applied to local government. However, strategic planning offers local government a new planning approach.

The strategic planning process begins with the identification of key decision makers in the community and its “stakeholders” (those individuals or groups with an interest in the outcome of the decisions made as a result of the planning process). The next step in the process is to identify strategic issues by making a “situation assessment,” sometimes known as the analysis of “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats” (SWOTs). Major emphasis should be placed on the selection and application of strategies to resolve identified issues and attain desired goals. The principal steps in strategic planning are

1. Scan the environment and select key issues.
2. Formulate goals or missions for the key issues.
3. Analyze each issue, developing a list of community strengths and weaknesses.
4. Develop strategies that are realistic and take into account those strengths and weaknesses.
5. Implement strategies using public and private resources.
6. Monitor and update the plan to ensure implementation.

Strategic planning and traditional comprehensive planning have a great deal in common. Both processes are based on the concept of goal-setting and the identification of decision makers and stakeholders. Strategic planning tends to narrow the range of stakeholders, while comprehensive planning tends to cast a wide net. This makes strategic planning more manageable; it's easier to reach a consensus through strategic than through comprehensive planning. On the other hand, comprehensive planning may develop a broader base of citizen support. Neither planning approach is going to be very successful in communities where there are wide differences in values and positions among citizens.

Strategic planning appears to focus its data collection and analysis on situation assessment. What are the issues? What forces bear on the issues? Comprehensive planning, on the other hand, often produces an insatiable appetite for data and data analysis; it can become an expensive and time-consuming fetish.

There appears to be little consensus as to the timeline for strategic plans – some say it should be long-range (20 years), and some say short-range (3 to 5 years). Comprehensive plans prepared by traditional methods usually work on a long-range timeline, though occasionally the timeline can be short-range.

The strength of strategic planning lies in its consideration of the methods that are to be used to attain the desired vision of the future, the goals of the plan. In other words, emphasis is placed on plan implementation. Strategic planning, in that sense, can be considered “pro-active” and comprehensive planning “reactive.”

Strategic planning is best applied when you are concentrating on one topic, or a few topics, at a time. Comprehensive planning requires consideration of a very broad range of topics that affect the quality of life in a community, all at one time. It is probable, therefore, that strategic planning can be accomplished more quickly and efficiently than comprehensive planning.

For these reasons, strategic planning is not well suited to the preparation of the traditional comprehensive plan or to the contemplation of long-range issues, which often evade clear definition, and which involve a multitude of interrelated topics.

However, strategic planning appears to be well suited to the consideration of immediate problems and to the identification of strategies to resolve them in the near future. It therefore may be classified as short-range in nature.

## 5. Vision-Based Planning

Vision-based planning, instead of looking primarily at community issues and trying to solve them, imagines what a community should look like in the future and then develops a plan to achieve that vision. This visioning process is unique, but it is often included as an element of a variety of master plans. It is a positive approach to planning and can be very inspiring.

### What Is Involved?

Your goal is to analyze past and current trends, seeking to answer such questions as “Where have we been?” and “Where are we going?” – then to step back and ask the community, “Where do we want to go?” You want to create a shared vision of the kind of community you hope to achieve within a certain number of years. Presumably there will be a difference between where you are going and where you want to go, so you develop a plan to move the community toward its desired future.

### Does This Approach Make Sense in Your Community?

A vision-based approach to planning is likely to work best in environments where people are willing

and able to join collectively in group processes, to share their views, and to listen respectfully to one another. It does not work as well in hostile environments where people are antagonistic.

A vision-based approach can also work well in communities where there are charismatic leaders who are willing to serve as conveners, and in communities that have planning staff who are skilled in facilitating group process sessions, charrettes, and the like. (For more information about the visioning process, see Chapter 5, "Community Visioning.")

## The Different Types of Master Plans

There are five types of master plans.

1. The comprehensive master plan
2. The small-area master plan
3. The functional master plan
4. The strategic master plan
5. The abridged master plan

Each type of master plan has distinguishing features and characteristics, as well as unique advantages and disadvantages in its development and application (see chart on page 103).

### 1. The Comprehensive Master Plan

The comprehensive plan has three unique characteristics: (1) it includes a broad range of master plan elements (all fifteen chapters); (2) it encompasses the entire municipality; and (3) it employs a long-range view (usually 10 to 20 years into the future).

The preparation of a comprehensive plan is the most ambitious undertaking of all plan types. It typically takes more time and costs more than any other kind of master plan. Yet it is the most common and traditional approach to planning. It addresses all the relevant topics and issues affecting a community's future and may include chapters on such topics as education, construction materials, open space, and travel and tourism, as determined by the community.

Preparing a comprehensive plan may be right for your community if the following circumstances apply:

1. There is a good track record of past planning success.
2. Your community already has a comprehensive master plan in place.
3. Local leadership supports long-range planning.
4. There are a variety of topics that should be studied on a community-wide basis.
5. There are no major planning issues or problems that need immediate attention.
6. The community can afford to take a year or more to prepare the plan.

The disadvantages of a comprehensive plan are

1. It is expensive and time consuming and requires the collection of a wide variety of data that must be analyzed.
2. The public participation processes may take a long time to complete and may be difficult to organize. It is usually much harder to get citizens from a broad spectrum of the population to consider a wide range of topics than it is to get them to consider a narrow range of topics.
3. Sometimes the tendency to recommend actions concerning the distant future closes off options better left open.
4. It is difficult to secure commitments for, and participation in, long-term projects.
5. Long-range plans tend not to be useful as the basis for compiling short-range capital improvement programs, as they tend to contain statements of general policy rather than descriptions of specific projects.
6. Long-range plans are not particularly well suited to serving as guides for short-term zoning decisions; this can cause problems, as zoning is required to be consistent with the comprehensive plan.
7. The means to implement long-range plans are often not apparent, or do not exist, while the plan is being prepared or reviewed. This introduces substantial uncertainty into the planning process.
8. Most people, including the public, have difficulty conceptualizing future conditions. With no clearly defined path, the public can become bewildered when thinking about how to get from where we are today to where we want to be a generation from now.

9. Comprehensive plans are lengthy and often contain more data and information than can be easily read and digested. Also they are costly to print and publish.

## 2. The Small-Area Master Plan

Small-area plans have the following unique characteristics: (1) they address specific districts, neighborhoods, or small geographical areas within a community; (2) they are generally mid-range (5 to 10 years) in scope; and (3) they cover multiple topics, but tend to contain greater specificity on a small-area basis than does a comprehensive plan.

It is desirable to prepare small-area plans for all the geographical areas of your community, if time and budget permit. However, given limited resources, small area plans should at least be prepared for those areas where changes are either occurring or anticipated, such as

- central business districts (downtown revitalization)
- historic preservation districts
- threatened open space preservation areas
- redevelopment areas
- high growth areas with many subdivisions, or where a high concentration of commercial and industrial growth is anticipated
- areas where there is a high interest in community design

Because small-area plans contain specific development recommendations for the area being studied, these plans can then be combined to form one complete master plan for your community. Comprehensive plans often include small-area plans that address certain regions, areas, or neighborhoods within a community. In this fashion, all of the fifteen sections of the master plan (see Chapter 3, “What Should Be Included in Your Master Plan”) can be addressed on both a community-wide and a small-area basis.

A small-area plan may be right for your community if the following applies:

- Planning for the entire municipality is not feasible at one time.
- Your community already has neighborhood plans in place.
- There is local leadership and support for planning within each geographical area.
- Your community is highly fragmented (divided both physically and socially).
- Certain areas of the community are changing more rapidly than others.
- You can combine your small-area plans into a complete community-wide master plan.

### The disadvantages of a small-area plan are

- You may not be able to combine your small-area plans into a complete community-wide master plan.
- It does not adequately address changes, problems, or issues that are consistent across the community and need to be addressed on a community-wide basis.
- It diverts attention away from community-wide problems and issues and focuses most on special areas.

## 3. The Functional Master Plan

Functional plans are plans prepared for one specific topic, with tie-ins to related subjects. Some examples are flood hazard mitigation, mass transit plans, bicycle paths, housing, and open space. Functional plans have the following characteristics: (1) they address one master plan element or subsection at a time; (2) they may cover an entire community or a sub-section thereof; (3) they may be either short-range (1 to 5 years) or long-range (10 to 20 years) in scope; and (4) they can stand alone as a separate plan or be combined as part of the community’s master plan.

Most long-range functional plans covering a specific subject or topic on a community-wide basis could be appropriate as an element in a community’s master plan. For example, a ground water management and protection plan that covers the entire community could be an element of the master plan.

Short-range functional plans that address subsections of the community are often quite specific. Local circumstances will usually determine whether they are suitable for inclusion as elements of a master plan, or whether they should be treated as stand-alone plans. In either case, short-range functional plans should be consistent with long-range functional plans, and all functional plans should be consistent with the overall community master plan (Anderson, 1995).

Preparing a functional plan may be right for your community if the following applies:

1. Planning for the entire municipality is not feasible at one time.
2. It makes more sense to complete 1 or 2 master plan elements first and then address the other 13 or 14 master plan elements later on.
3. Your community already has in place a number of functional plans for various elements of your master plan.
4. You can make better progress in achieving the development of a community-wide master plan one element at a time.
5. There are one or two issues or topics of major concern in your community or there is a lack of support on the part of the community power brokers for preparing or updating the master plan at one time.
6. The financial support available for planning is insufficient to permit you to develop a full-blown master plan at one time.
7. You can combine your functional plans into a complete community-wide master plan in the future.

The disadvantages of a functional plan are that

- It is a slow process that takes years to complete, if at all.
- It does not adequately address changes, problems, or issues that are consistent across the community and/or need to be addressed on a community-wide basis.
- It directs attention away from community-wide problems by focusing on special problems or topic areas.

- It may not address all fifteen elements of the master plan, as provided for by state statutes (this does not represent a legal concern, however, as only two of the elements are mandatory by state law).

#### 4. The Strategic Master Plan

The strategic master plan is a version of the comprehensive plan. However, unlike small-area plans and functional plans that can become component parts of a composite master plan, the goal when preparing a strategic master plan is to identify a small number of issues that are the most important to a community's overall vitality, today and in the future, and then take action on those issues to ensure the best possible future for the community.

The basic characteristics of a strategic master plan are: (1) it is narrowly focused on what have been determined to be the most pressing and important issues of your community; (2) it can be either short-range (2 to 5 years) or long-range (10 to 20 years) in scope; (3) it encompasses the entire area of your community; and (4) the elements, or chapters, that are included in the plan are based on the priority issues identified by the community.

A strategic master plan may be right for your community because

- It does not try to address all issues.
- It can employ either a short- or long-range perspective.
- It introduces a regional perspective to local planning by forcing people to compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of their community with those of others in the region.
- It reminds participants that their community is in competition with other communities in attempting to attract desired land uses, industries, investments, funding, and the like. The community must devise and implement workable strategies.
- It can increase a community's competitive advantage by transforming perceived local weaknesses into strengths. Strategic planning is generally recommended in communities that are experiencing stagnation, decline, and/or diminishing

investments and that need to think realistically about their options and to develop practical strategies in a regional context.

The disadvantages of preparing a strategic master plan are that

- It is not truly comprehensive in that it diverts attention away from less important issues and problems that must be addressed on a community-wide basis.
- It does not include all the sections of a comprehensive plan.

### 5. The Abridged Master Plan

Abridged plans consist primarily of the vision and land use chapters, which are mandated by state law. None, or only a few, of the traditional, now optional, elements of the master plan – such as an implementation section and a chapter on natural resources – are included. As required by state statute, the abridged master plan must be based on a community visioning process. It must also be based on studies of population, economic activity, and natural, historical, and cultural resources, as needed to prepare the land use chapter. Those studies are then used to complete a series of maps and to develop goals and action plans.

The general characteristics of the abridged master plan are: (1) it primarily includes the two mandatory sections of the master plan as required by state statutes; (2) it encompasses the entire geographical area of the community; and (3) it is mid-range (5 to 10 years) in scope.

The abridged master plan is appropriate for communities with fewer than 10,000 people, where no professional planners are on staff, and where community volunteers and planning board members can assume much of the work. It may be useful for some communities of over 10,000 people, but those communities may also be financially able to develop long-range comprehensive plans with full-time professional planners on staff.

The following guidelines are offered for the preparation of an abridged master plan:

1. A planning process should be established that allows community residents and volunteers to prepare the bulk of the plan. Local residents should be encouraged to offer ideas, conduct research, collect data and prepare reports. A professional planner may be helpful in preparing parts of the abridged plan, especially the land-use section, but it should not be required that a professional draft the plan.

2. The municipality should ask for assistance from the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Office in conducting the community visioning process through its Community Profile Project. (Refer to Chapter 5, “Community Visioning,” and Chapter 10, “Tools and Techniques,” for more information about the community visioning process and the UNH Cooperative Extension Community Profile Project.)

3. The amount of information to be included in the plan must be flexible and need only serve the interests of the community and meet the basic legal requirements of the state statute. Foremost among these is that the plan should always include a land use plan and maps that show both the present and the future (desired) land use pattern in the community. **Click here to launch A Step-By-Step Guide for How to Prepare a Future Land Use Map.** A flexible planning document will facilitate effective updates and express new community goals or present new strategies for achieving current goals.

4. The plan must be a valid document upon which to base (a) land use regulations and (b) advance planning efforts to aid in the efficient use of community resources, such as the capital improvement program, community development initiatives, and the revitalization of town centers.

5. The plan must be reasonably inexpensive to prepare. It should no more than 50 to 100 pages in length. The objective should be to produce a plan for under \$10,000, exclusive of printing costs.

The cost of an abridged master plan will tend to increase with the size of the community and the level of involvement by planning consultants and/or regional planning commissions.

Generally, the smaller the town, the lower the cost, as fewer data sources are needed; but this is not a hard and fast rule. Many communities with populations of fewer than 2,000 people do not have readily available data, and it can be expensive to collect. This handbook encourages communities to make use of local volunteer help whenever possible. While professional assistance may be needed in certain areas such as land use, natural resources, and economic development, it is recommended that you contact county, regional, and state agencies and the cooperative extension service for planning assistance. It is also recommended that your community not overlook graduate and undergraduate programs in community planning. It might be possible to arrange for a small team of students, under faculty supervision, to assist in preparing your plan. Often volunteers are able to provide the necessary information and services at a much lower cost than would be charged by a private consultant.

6. The final suggestion is that an abridged plan should be timely. It should be completed within a year, reviewed annually, and updated every 3 to 5 years. The best time to prepare the plan, especially for communities of over 2,500 showing active growth, is within the third to sixth year of each decade. This is because the plan relies heavily on data collected by the US Census of Population and Housing. Preliminary census results are usually available one full year after the beginning of each decade. This data will remain useful for several years, but as time passes between census counts, new estimates and projections will begin to be needed.

The advantages of preparing an abridged master plan are that

- It is relatively easy and inexpensive to create, and community volunteers can perform most of the work (thus, professional assistance may not be needed).
- It is not necessary to address all fifteen sections of the master plan as described by state statutes. Only the two mandatory sections, on visioning and land use, are required.

- It can employ either a short-range or a long-range perspective.
- It can be initiated and carried out by local citizens working with the planning board.
- It can be readily tied into local capital improvement programs and other advanced planning initiatives.
- It can be easily updated.

A disadvantage of preparing an abridged master plan is that it is not comprehensive.

No matter what type of plan is developed, your community's master plan should at least

- provide a concise baseline of data about your town's environment, natural and cultural resources, population, housing stock, economic base, needs, and opportunities
- include a description of the trends that have affected your community and make projections about how those trends might continue or change in the future
- articulate a shared community vision of what you want your town or city to be like in the future
- outline the growth management policies and objectives that are to shape your local regulations and guide your public decisions.

## Which Master Plan Makes the Most Sense for Your Community?

Now that you have a good understanding of the different planning approaches and the basic types of master plans, it should be much easier to determine which master plan makes the most sense for your community. The following charts on page 102 and 103 can help you in making this decision.

As summarized by the planners who prepared *Planner on a Disc*, a master plan is generally intended to

- portray a vision for the future
- establish goals and objectives for land use, development, community facilities, and infrastructure

- examine the past changes and current trends to project future trends
- identify community-wide issues and concerns
- identify a community's weaknesses and strengths
- express the desires, aims, wishes, and ambitions of the community
- chart a course for growth and change
- promote the public interest and core virtues of the community
- build support and consensus around ideas
- identify alternatives
- offer recommendations and guidelines for decision-makers
- shape growth policies
- establish a foundation for implementing land use regulations
- set forth strategies, actions, and recommendations
- set forth guiding principles and concepts

## Other Related Community Plans

### Downtown Revitalization Plan

Your community may have undertaken downtown development projects or participated in a Main Street Program that required some planning or documentation for a grant. If you have a solid downtown plan that is supported by your community, you should try to integrate the major components of this plan into your master plan and concentrate on implementing critical downtown strategies that will benefit the community.

### Economic Development Plan

A good economic development plan charts the course for establishing or maintaining a sustainable local economy that offers employment opportunities for local residents, opportunities for existing and new businesses, and a healthy revenue source for your community. Often these plans are prepared by your regional planning commission or your local economic development commission on behalf of your community. If your community has adopted such a plan, the major elements and recommendations of that plan should be included in your master plan, particularly in the chapter on economic development.

### Open Space Plan

Many communities across the state are developing open space plans to ensure that adequate open land – including natural areas, forests, playing fields, and hiking trails – is protected in the future. Often these plans are prepared by your regional planning commission on behalf of your community. The major components of these plans should be integrated into your master plan, particularly in the chapters on natural resources and recreation.

### Tourism and Historic Preservation Plans

Quite often, detailed tourism or historic preservation plans have been prepared for your community that identify needs and outline a course of action. These plans have short- and long-term recommendations that can be referenced or incorporated into your master plan; they can save you many hours of research and can help to establish your community's goals in the areas of economic development and cultural and historical resources.

### Transportation Corridor Plans

Your community may also have separate transportation or corridor plans, indicating road pavement conditions, road construction information, right-of-way characteristics, traffic characteristics, proposed improvements, and the like, which have been adopted as formal reports. Some community public works and highway departments maintain less formal plans in the form of road condition maps, upgrade and maintenance priority lists, or historical road reports. Sidewalk plans, rail corridors, and bicycle facilities are often incorporated into transportation plans; in some cases, these may be separate functional plans themselves. Large development proposals may also require traffic impact analysis to determine the future adequacy of the local transportation network. All of these plans can be useful in the transportation chapter of your master plan.

### Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

See discussion on page 21.

## Master Plan Examples:

Provided below is a sampling of master plans from various municipalities across the state. These plans are identified for informational purposes only and are not a list of recommended plans.

### Comprehensive Master Plans

Goffstown Master Plan, Goffstown, NH, 1997  
(see: <http://www.townofgoffstown.nh.us/planning/masterplan.shtml>)

Town of Raymond, NH, Master Plan, 2002  
(see: <http://www.raymond-nh.com/masterplan.pdf>)

### Small-Area Master Plans

Concord 2020 (in process)  
(see: <http://www.onconcord.com/>)

Portsmouth Master Plan 2003 (in process)  
(see: <http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/masterplan/index.html>)

### Functional Master Plans

City of Keene Master Plan, 1993-97  
Not available on-line at this time.

### Strategic Master Plans

Strategic Master Plan Update 2000, Bedford, NH  
Not available on-line at this time.

### Visionary Master Plans

Nashua Master Plan  
(see [www.gonashua.com](http://www.gonashua.com))

### Relationship Between Planning Approach and Type of Master Plan

	Comprehensive Master Plan	Small-Area Master Plan	Functional Master Plan	Strategic Master Plan	The Abridged Master Plan
Comprehensive Planning	★	★			
Issue-Oriented Planning	★	★			
Single-Topic Planning			★		
Strategic Planning				★	★
Vision-Based Planning	★	★	★	★	★

## Key Features of Master Plan Types

	<b>Comprehensive Master Plan</b>	<b>Small-Area Master Plan</b>	<b>Functional Master Plan</b>	<b>Strategic Master Plan</b>	<b>Abridged Master Plan</b>
<b>Distinguishing Features</b>	Comprehensive, ambitious, broad and general. Encompasses the entire community.	Focuses on small areas or regions of the community. Individual plans can be combined to form a completed master plan.	Focuses on one or two specific topics or elements at a time. Individual plans can be combined to form a completed master plan.	Realistic - does not try to address all issues or elements, but focuses on the strategic issues and elements that are the most pressing.	Focuses primarily on land use. Less ambitious, more general. Encompasses the entire community.
<b>Scope</b>	Long-Range (10-20 yrs.)	Middle-Range (5-10 yrs.)	Middle-Range (5-10 yrs.)	Short- (2-4 yrs) to Long-Range (10-20 yrs.)	Short- (2-4 yrs.) to Middle-Range (5-10 yrs.)
<b>Key Elements (Chapters)</b>	Includes most, if not all, of the 15 elements or chapters as provided by state statutes.	Includes most, if not all, of the 15 elements or chapters as provided by state statutes.	Looks only at one or two elements at a time on a comprehensive, community-wide basis.	Includes some of the basic 15 elements but focuses mainly on the key strategic issues/topic areas.	Includes only the 2 mandatory elements - the vision and land use sections.
<b>Relative Cost</b>	High	Low to Medium	Low to Medium	Medium	Low
<b>Relative Time Commitment</b>	Long - 1 to 2 years (depending on size of community)	Short to Medium - 3 to 6 months	Short to Medium - 3 to 6 months	Short to Medium - 3 to 6 months	Short to Medium - 3 to 6 months

## *How To Conduct A Community Visioning Process*

Community visioning can be organized in many different ways utilizing a variety of public participation techniques. However, creating a common vision requires several actions to complete the process. While there are no hard and fast “rules” for this process, each community will need to find its own pace, participants, and techniques that work best. What this guide offers is an example process and a variety of tools that have been used effectively in other communities just like yours.

Here is one example of how community visioning can be accomplished over the course of several working sessions. It is based upon The Center for Rural Pennsylvania’s *Planning for the Future: A Handbook on Community Visioning*. This example is neither magical nor absolute and it can be modified to meet your own community’s needs. **REMEMBER:** It is always advisable to provide refreshments at your community workshops and to videotape all your working sessions.

The three basic elements of the process:

- **Establish a Steering Committee.** This committee should be responsible for oversight and organization of the entire process.
- **Community Workshops.** Open public meetings that are used to inform citizens about the visioning process, to discuss the progress being made and to discuss issues affecting the community.
- **Taskforces.** Small groups that gather information on a specific issue affecting the community and identify possible solutions.

Each of these elements are included in the following example. The timeframe in developing a vision statement can range from 6 to 12 months depending on the level of commitment of the participants. In general, your community visioning process should proceed as follows:

1. **Getting Started:** Steering Committee forms and begins planning for the first workshop.
2. **First Community Workshop:** Steering Committee provides an overview of the visioning process and asks participants to identify issues affecting their community.
3. **Establishing Taskforces:** Steering Committee tallies results, develops list of taskforces, and plans for second workshop.
4. **Second Community Workshop:** Steering Committee reviews activities to date and breaks participants into small taskforces, giving each a specific issue to examine in detail.
5. **Keeping on Track:** Steering Committee ensures that taskforces are meeting regularly and plans for the third workshop.
6. **Third Community Workshop:** Taskforces report major findings to the community. Participants are asked to discuss what they want their community to look like in the future.

7. **Drafting the Visioning Statement:** Steering Committee ensures that task forces are meeting regularly and drafts a tentative vision statement.
8. **Fourth Community Workshop/Celebration:** Public unveiling of vision statement and celebration of the community and its residents.
9. **Marketing and Making the Vision a Reality:** Steering Committee and taskforces present the vision statement to community groups, local governments, and other organizations for their formal approval of the statement. Committee and taskforces request these groups to use the statement when making decisions affecting the community.
10. **Action Plan:** Working with various community organizations and governments, the Steering Committee develops an action plan by implementing the taskforces' recommendations and other elements of the vision statement.
11. **Annual Progress Report:** The Steering Committee plans a meeting that reviews the activities and accomplishments to date and what activities will be implemented the following year.

Keep in mind in community visioning there is no absolute formula where step one will automatically lead to steps two, three and four. The steps outlined here have worked in many communities, but not all, so you should feel free to combine, rearrange, or even eliminate steps as needed to expedite the process. The final measure of your vision's success is not how closely you follow this example, but how effective you are in improving your community's quality of life.

### ***GETTING STARTED***

In all communities, there are people and organizations that are respected and active. Business owners, elected officials, members of non-profit agencies, educators, health care professionals and others who are actively interested in improving their community should be members of your Steering Committee. Key points to remember in forming a Steering Committee include:

- Open membership up to many organizations;
- Reach out across the community: public, private, and nonprofit;
- Be inclusive, not exclusive;
- Don't avoid differences in opinion; and
- Don't get stuck on the past. Remember this a plan for the future.

Once the list of likely members has been put together, invite them to a meeting. Don't be disappointed if only a few show up. It takes momentum to get going, but once it starts, it is contagious.

At the first meeting, and at others if necessary, do the following:

1. **Identify who is missing from the group.** Make a concerted effort to identify persons and/or organizations that should be involved. At this point, the list should

- include those who are considered influential in shaping community opinions. These individuals should be invited to the next Steering Committee meeting.
2. Select a Chair or Co-Chair of the Steering Committee. The Chair's job is to keep the process focused and to give every participant the chance to have a say in the process.
  3. **Establish a positive attitude.** Initiate a brief discussion on the community's strengths to help get a positive tone going.
  4. **Develop an action plan.** This plan does not need to be very detailed, but it should include the next step in the process, when the public should be involved, what resources are available to see the process through, and who will be available to provide guidance and technical support.
  5. **Develop a working definition of your community.** Meeting participants should leave with an understanding of the geographic boundaries of the community and an understanding of the economic, cultural and social bonds that make them a community.

**REMEMBER:** It is a good idea to ask other organizations or agencies for assistance and technical support. In addition, it is a good idea to seek contributions and donations to help provide for the food at the workshops.

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Form a functional Steering Committee made up of 10 to 20 members who represent a cross section of the community
- Time: One to two months
- Cost: None

### *FIRST COMMUNITY WORKSHOP*

At the first community workshop, the Steering Committee needs to be concerned about two things: organization and outcome. The organization is how the workshop is put together. The outcome is what information is generated during the workshop. Both of these elements are critical for a successful workshop.

#### Organization:

Organizing a community workshop is not difficult, but it can be challenging. The Steering Committee however needs to be in charge of this process. Below are some of the basic items that should be considered.

1. **Location:** The first step is to select a location. As a general rule, you should choose a facility that people are familiar with and comfortable visiting. There must be good access and available parking.
2. **Date:** Selecting a date can be a tricky matter. Weekday morning workshops can be just as popular as evening workshops. Similarly, Saturday morning can also be very popular. There are two general rules to follow when selecting a workshop

- date: first, make sure on other community group has an event scheduled at the same time; second, give the Steering Committee plenty of lead time to adequately promote and organize the workshop.
3. **Agenda:** Developing and following an agenda is essential. An agenda lets participants know what is going on and how long the workshop will last. Some key items to include in the agenda are: (1) welcoming remarks and the purpose of the workshop (Why are we here and what do we want to accomplish?); (2) a large block of time for small group discussions; and (3) concluding remarks and a discussion of the next step (Where do we go from here?).
  4. **Speakers:** When selecting speakers, it is important to choose people who have effective communication skills and who are comfortable speaking in front of large groups. The welcoming speaker should be from the Steering Committee. The person giving the overview of the visioning process can also be a Steering Committee member, or someone from outside the community (such as a government agency, consultant, etc.). Pre-select and train a small group of facilitators for the workshop. Your facilitators can be members of the Steering Committee or local resource people, like your planner, RC&D coordinator, or county extension agent.
  5. **Promotion:** To ensure good attendance, promote the workshop throughout the community. You may consider printed brochures or flyers, which are somewhat expensive and effective tools or you can post signs at visible locations. Contact local media resources: newspapers, radio stations, and public access television stations. Also, consider personally contacting people, municipal officials as well as state and federal legislators.
  6. **Food:** Offering food and refreshments, or a meal sponsored by an area organization is always a good idea.

#### Outcomes:

The very first outcome is the responsibility of the speaker. The second is the product of the small group discussions. After the keynote speakers, the large group should be broken down into small discussion groups of no more than 10 people. Participants can be randomly assigned to different groups to help the discussion flow more freely. Each of the small groups should have a facilitator, who must make sure that everyone in the group has a chance to participate and that the group develops a list of issues.

The facilitator's first task is to ask the group members to list the issues in their community. This can be done as a brainstorm or by asking each group member to write down his or her issues on a piece of paper. Comments should be recorded on flip charts so that the entire group can see. Afterwards, every participant should "vote" for the top five issues by placing a colored sticker next to the most important comments recorded on the flip charts.

Participants should be reminded during this process that they are not here to solve problems, but to identify and take stock of all the issues and to identify the most important issues for the community's future.

#### KEY OUTCOMES:

- Community understands the visioning process and develops a list of key issues.
- Time: 2 to 3 hours
- Cost: Promotion, refreshments and supplies.

#### *ESTABLISHING TASKFORCES:*

A week or two after the first workshop, the Steering Committee should meet and assess what went right at the workshop and what needs to be improved. The Committee also needs to take the results of the participants' issues lists and identify similarities and differences among the lists. These lists need to be condensed or combined into four or five broad topics. These topics will serve as the basis for the taskforces.

Each taskforce needs to be assigned a temporary leader, who is usually a Steering Committee member. The leader is responsible for informally recruiting members to the taskforce and collecting the information on that particular topic.

In addition to identifying the taskforces, the Steering Committee should begin preparing for the next community workshop, which should be scheduled within two months after the first workshop.

#### KEY OUTCOMES:

- Community understands the visioning process and develops a list of key issues.
- Time: 2 to 3 hours
- Cost: Promotion, refreshments and supplies.

#### *SECOND COMMUNITY WORKSHOP*

Following the same organizational procedures as the first workshop, the Steering Committee should design the second workshop to get the taskforces up and running. The second workshop should offer community residents or business owners who could not or would not attend the first public workshop the opportunity to become involved.

The workshop should begin with an overview of the activities of the first workshop and the visioning process. Participants should then be directed to meet with their taskforce group. Except for the temporary taskforce leader, try not to pre-assign members to each taskforce group. Participants should be allowed to join the task force of their choosing.

Within the taskforces, several things should happen:

1. **Select a leader.** The leader may be the temporary leader or someone else.
2. **Identify who is missing from the group.** Are there individuals or organizations that have special expertise that the group needs?
3. **Select the next meeting date.** The taskforces should begin meeting regularly after the workshop.

4. **Complete a SWOT analysis of the taskforce issues** (see SWOT below).
5. **Begin identifying the resources available to address the taskforce issue.**

### SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Borrowed from business management practices, SWOT analysis is a quick way to assess an issue or topic in terms of its strengths – what is good, what are its positive attributes; weaknesses – what is wrong, what are the problems; opportunities – what can be done to improve the situation, both short and long-term; and threats – what are the external/internal threats in the future.

For communities, SWOT analysis is a useful tool to explore an issue. Below is an example of a group that used SWOT analysis to assess their downtown:

#### Downtown Revitalization

- Strengths: Good mix of retail and service; good traffic flow; many historic buildings
- Weaknesses: Not enough parking; lots of vacant store fronts; high property taxes
- Opportunities: Recruit a downtown manager; coordinate store hours; repave the sidewalks
- Threats: Being ignored by municipal government; shopping malls; highway bypass

#### KEY OUTCOMES:

- Establish active taskforces.
- Time: 2 to 3 hours
- Cost: Promotion, refreshments and supplies

### ***KEEPING ON TRACK***

A week or so after the second workshop, the Steering Committee should meet and again assess what went right at the workshop and what needs to be improved. The second task for the Committee is to make sure the taskforces are meeting regularly. The leader of each taskforce should be asked to give a brief report on their findings and activities to date.

The Steering Committee should also continue to grow. New members should be asked to join and to take a leadership role. The Committee should also begin informally surveying other groups to determine what their mission is and how they can work together.

Finally, the Steering Committee should begin planning for the third workshop. This workshop should be scheduled on later than two months after the second workshop.

#### KEY OUTCOMES:

- Keeping the taskforces active, planning for the next workshop.
- Time: 2 to 3 months
- Cost: None.

### ***THIRD COMMUNITY WORKSHOP***

Following the same organizational procedures as the first workshop, the Steering Committee should design the third workshop to allow for the actual writing of the community's vision statement. This workshop should also give individuals who could not attend the first two workshops, the opportunity to become involved.

After the welcoming remarks and a review of the activities to date, participants should be randomly assigned to small groups of no more than 10 people. Each small group should have a pre-assigned facilitator. The role of this facilitator is to record the answers to the questions below on a flip chart and to keep the session focused.

- What features (physical, social, culture) do residents use to identify their community?
- What are the community's principle values?
- What defines a "good" quality of life in the community?
- What are the community's opportunities?
- What things in the community should be preserved? What things should be changed?
- What should the community physically look like in the future?
- How fast should changes occur?

By now, most workshop participants should have a good understanding of their community, including its problems and opportunities. The facilitator should encourage an open discussion of the questions above and should discourage participants from focusing on "how" issues. The facilitator should also stay clear of any discussion about funding and project feasibility since these matters stifle creativity. The "how" questions are typically addressed during the planning process.

The timeframe for answering these questions can vary from community to community. Typically, most places incorporate a five to ten-year timeframe.

After a short break, the small groups should meet again to begin writing a vision statement. Using the responses from the first session, participants should be asked to write a short one to two paragraph statement about their community and its future. Elements of this statement may include a list of community values; a list of future opportunities; and a description of what the community will look and feel like in the future.

Each small group should develop its own statement. Because the statements will ultimately be combined, the groups should not get overly concerned about spelling or grammar. At this point, it's important to flesh out ideas and dreams about the community's future.

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Develop small group vision statements.
- Time: 2 to 3 hours
- Cost: Promotion, refreshments and supplies.

***DRAFTING THE VISION STATEMENTS***

Another week after the third workshop, the Steering Committee should meet and assess what went right at the workshop and what needs to be improved. The key assignment for the Steering Committee is to take the small group vision statements and combine them into a single statement.

This task is not as daunting as it may seem. In most instances, the small groups will come up with very similar statements. Oftentimes, the only tricky part is wordsmithing the final statement.

Once the statement is completed, it should be test driven. The small group facilitators, selected community leaders, and others active in the visioning process should have an opportunity to make sure the statement captures what participants actually said at the workshop. Any modifications should be done at this time.

The Steering Committee should also make sure that the taskforces are meeting regularly and should ask taskforce leaders to provide brief updates on their activities. Plans for the final community workshop should also be underway.

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Draft the vision statement, keep taskforces active, plan for the next workshop.
- Time: 2 to 3 months
- Cost: None.

***FOURTH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP/CELEBRATION***

The fourth workshop should be a community celebration. It could be a picnic or street festival, or even a part of some other type of community-wide event. The only "work" that should take place at this workshop is to make sure that everyone is having fun.

Ideally, the celebration should be held no later than three months after the third workshop and should mark the official unveiling of the community's vision statement.

**REMEMBER:** Invite members of the media to attend the event so that the activities of

the day and vision statement can be introduced to a wider audience. It's a good idea to print and mount the vision statement on large poster board and to have extra copies of the statement printed to pass out to the media and the audience.

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Unveil the vision statement to the public and celebrate.
- Time: Varies.
- Cost: Varies.

***MARKETING AND MAKING THE VISION A REALITY***

After the community celebration, the Steering Committee should meet and begin developing a marketing strategy for the vision statement and, more importantly, a strategic action plan. Both of these activities can occur at the same time.

The marketing strategy should be designed to get the word out about the vision statement. More specifically, it should explain what the vision statement is, how it was created, and how it is to be used. The strategy should include features that will help it recruit volunteers for developing the strategic action plan.

**REMEMBER:** The objective of your marketing strategy is to get as many groups and organizations as possible to support and use the statement, and to get as many people as possible involved in the planning and implementation process.

The strategic action plan is the detailed strategy on how the vision statement will be implemented. The action plan should include any resources needed to implement the plan. This is where the work of the taskforces comes into play. Although the plan is a community-wide activity, it may be necessary to get outside technical advice.

In developing the strategic action plan, the Steering Committee should first break the vision statement down into its basic components, and explain the intent behind each component. Next, it should describe the individual goals and objectives of the taskforces.

With this information and input from different community groups, the Steering Committee can also identify and prioritize specific projects. Simple low cost projects should be tackled first and larger, more expensive projects should be placed near the end of the vision timeline.

After the goals and projects are identified, the Committee should examine funding resources. Experience has shown that communities with an identified vision and action plan are more successful in securing funds than those communities that want money for a project here and there without any knowledge of how these projects will ultimately fit together.

The role of the Steering Committee and taskforces is to make sure the projects are completed and that groups are coordinated.

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Secure community support for the vision statement and develop a strategic action plan to implement the vision statement.
- Time: Ongoing.
- Cost: Varies.

***ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT***

As the strategic action plan is being implemented, it is a good idea to let residents and others know how the plan is progressing. Develop an annual progress report and make it available to the public. Consider passing out copies of the report during town meetings, including it the town's annual report, and sending a copy to the local newspaper.

Generally, the report should include a copy of the vision statement and a summary of the strategic action plan. It should also review any accomplishments to date and recognize every individual or organization that made meaningful contributions during the year. Additionally it may include any before-and-after pictures and should outline coming year's activities.

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Report implementation progress to the community.
- Time: Every year.
- Cost: Varies.

# **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLANNER'S WORKBOOK**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

DEVAL PATRICK, GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY MURRAY, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

IAN BOWLES, SECRETARY

**DIVISION OF CONSERVATION SERVICES**

BOB O'CONNOR, DIRECTOR

100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, SUITE 900

BOSTON, MA 02114

[www.state.ma.us/envir](http://www.state.ma.us/envir)

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Principal Authors: Ralph R. Willmer and Ezra Glenn of McGregor and Associates, Boston and Jennifer Jillson Soper, Division of Conservation Services

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Principal authors: Melissa Cryan, Division of Conservation Services and Janet Curtis, EOEEA

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Greenfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, June 2007. Prepared by the Department of Planning and Development.  
Ipswich Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1996. Prepared by the Ipswich Open Space Committee (Carolyn Britt and Glenn Hazelton, Committee Co-Chairs).  
Melrose Open Space and Recreation Plan, October 2007. Prepared by the Office of Planning and Community Development (Denise Gaffey, Director).  
Peabody Recreation and Open Space Plan, May 2006. Prepared by the Peabody Department of Community Development & Planning and the Recreation Park & Forestry Department, with the Open Space Plan Advisory Group.  
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Yarmouth Open Space and Recreation Plan, December 2007. Prepared by Horsley Witten Group, Inc. (Julie Ann Conroy, Principal Author).

## SECTION 2 – INTRODUCTION

### A. *Statement of Purpose*

Describe why the plan was written. Include an update since the last plan citing past and current efforts to protect and enhance open space and recreational opportunities.

A brief description is all that is necessary, but you want to give the reader an idea of the status of open space and recreation planning in the community: is this a first-time Open Space and Recreation Plan or is this the tenth update? Has there been a recent water supply crisis that took everyone by surprise resulting in the realization that comprehensive planning would be better for the future than a narrow band-aid solution for this particular problem? Is there a watershed-wide or subwatershed rationale for protection efforts in a particular area?

### B. *Planning Process and Public Participation*

Describe the process used to develop the plan. Name the primary researchers and writers, people who worked on committees, etc. List the meetings, surveys, public participation, municipal assessments, etc. that contributed to the development of the plan. It would make sense in this section to support the formation of an advisory committee to monitor progress on the plan.

Public participation lies at the heart of any effective planning effort. Most communities undertake the planning and public participation process on their own, without the hiring of a consultant. A consultant could be useful in helping with the public participation process for large communities, where getting feedback from a significant portion of the residents would be daunting work for a volunteer committee. When planning your public participation process, keep in mind that meetings should be held in universally accessible locations and, where applicable, locations that are

convenient to public transportation. Make sure to involve a diverse group of residents from your community. Having an online survey or sending surveys home with school children are important outreach tools, but will only ensure that a subset of your residents' opinions will be voiced. The Trust for Public Land has a good reference guide on the "Best Practices in Community Engagement." These are listed in Appendix J.

Listed below are different techniques communities can use to gauge public interest in recreation and conservation and where the perceived gaps are. Read the options and determine which of the techniques will work best in your community. If an Environmental Justice population lives in your community, enhanced outreach is expected. Language accessibility for non-English speaking residents is a key component to citizen outreach. Note that any good planning process will use a variety of these techniques, and some could be combined within a single event (e.g., working-groups as a component of a public forum, covered by the local paper).

- Public Meeting: Under Massachusetts General Law, most meetings held by a municipal board, commission, council, task force, or other body is required to comply with the Open Meeting Law. Notice of meetings must be posted at the City or Town Hall and all interested members of the public must be allowed to attend. As a good rule of thumb, all meetings associated with the development of an Open Space and Recreation Plan should be considered public meetings.
- Public Hearing: A legal term for a particular kind of public meeting, requiring more extensive notice (typically publication in a newspaper at least two weeks in advance), recording of proceedings, minutes, and other formal elements. Not all public meetings need to be public hearings.
- Public Forum: A meeting held to present material and seek additional input. A moderator is needed to frame and coordinate the discussion, but the emphasis should be on the

interaction of the audience (typically viewed as “participants”). Be sure to have a clear agenda for each forum – specific information that will be presented (an open space map, a build-out projection, the results of a survey, etc.), a particular topic that will be discussed, and stick to it.

- **Visioning Session and Charrette:** Often a committee can use a public meeting to create some shared product – for example, a common vision for a region of the community, or a design of a new recreational facility. Visioning Sessions emphasize brainstorming and open discussion and work well for developing consensus on shared goals and objectives. Charrettes emphasize “hands-on” interaction, typically through drawing or mapping project, and work well for efforts involving design problems.

- **Working Group Meeting:** Meeting in smaller group (5-10 people) can allow for a more careful and involved treatment of a specific topic. Often the real work of the plan gets done through such small groups: drafting specific language for goals, objectives, and actions; dividing up tasks to research and present; deciding what to include on maps; developing alternatives to consider; and so on. Note that working-group meetings can occur on their own or as part of a larger Public Forum (“break-out groups”).

- **Survey:** A survey can be a good tool to gather input quickly from a wide range of residents. However, most planning surveys are not scientific – for example, only people interested in the issue tend to respond. Nonetheless, they can provide a good base to start from, and they help to define the range of opinions in the public at large. Don’t underestimate the time required to tabulate and analyze the results, or the possible costs involved with mailing. Consider mailing only to a random sample, or coordinating mailing with community water bills or annual census forms. Also, be careful not to bias the results through the phrasing of the questions; open-ended questions will provide more useful information (but be harder to tabulate)

than strict “agree/disagree” or “ranking” questions. See a sample of a survey in Appendix H.

- **Media:** Even if the public will not come to you, you can still go to them, through the media. Local papers, public access cable television, school newsletters, and other local media channels offer opportunities to inform the public about the planning process and solicit their input. Beyond the usual meeting announcements in local papers, contribute substantive articles, letters, or guest editorials on the planning process; participate on cable talk shows to discuss the elements of the plan; and invite the media to attend and record or report on your meetings and public events. Be sure to utilize alternative media outlets such as foreign language newspapers, church bulletins, or NGO newsletters to reach Environmental Justice populations.

- **Public Events:** Host a walk or event at a critical property that is not protected (with the owners enthusiastic permission) or at a protected and cherished property in the community. This could help make the case for protecting open space, and hopefully motivate more volunteers.

### C. **Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation**

Describe the enhanced outreach and public participation process to EJ populations, including specific tools or actions taken to ensure meaningful involvement in the OSRP planning process.

**Note:** If residents lack English language proficiency, translation services should be provided for both written material (including public meeting notification) as well as at public meetings.

Appendices J and K describe outreach techniques that may be helpful to your community while completing this section of the OSRP.

## **Statement of Purpose/Planning Process and Public Participation**

### **Peabody Open Space & Recreation Plan**

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for future management and development of City Recreation and Open Space assets. Municipal resources for improvement and acquisition projects are limited which puts great emphasis on strategy and implementation. The open space plan's inventory and analysis guides the broad goals while synthesis guides the implementation actions. This plan focuses on specific actions to achieve the goals.

This plan, the third in a series of updates to the 1986 Open Space and Recreation Plan, will build on progress since the 1998 update with emphasis on action. In 2002, the City adopted the CPA to fund park development and open space acquisition. This additional funding will insure projects are completed and not just theorized. The completion of the 2005 Plan will provide focus and set achievable goals for the community.

#### Planning Process

In the fall of 2003 the Department of Community Development and Planning began a comprehensive update to this plan in coordination with the Open Space Plan Advisory Group. The Advisory Group includes each of the various land use, planning, and community boards. Members from the City Council, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Parks Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and Historical Commission helped to develop this plan along with City staff and members of the general public. The DCDP collected background information and data on the City's resources and open lands, while other City departments contributed inventory information about the water supply, infrastructure, and recreation areas and programs. At a series of meetings in the summer of 2004, the draft Recreation and Open Space Plan was circulated for input by community boards and public comment utilizing the City's website.

The draft Recreation and Open Space Plan was prepared following the guidelines established by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services for the preparation of state-approved open space and recreation master plans. Background information was gathered and an inventory of resources completed to provide a basis from which to analyze the City's open space and recreation needs. The formation of goals, objectives, and appropriate actions followed. These goals, objectives, and actions form the substance of a five-year plan for implementation. The plan was further reviewed by staff and municipal boards for comment and revision. A series of public hearings were held during this process and the City's website was used to obtain feedback and survey information.

#### Public Participation

The City of Peabody favored an inclusionary and dynamic public participation process that maximized public comment on parks, recreation, open space and related topics. As a forum for public comment, the City chose to hold a series of public hearings on the draft plan. Citizens were able to make comments and recommendations to planning staff and could provide additional comments and suggestions using comment sheets and the City's Recreation & Open Space Plan Survey. At a series of six public presentations, in the summer of 2004, planning staff presented the draft plan to the City's various Boards and Commissions, to receive feedback from board members and the general public. These meetings and public hearings were scheduled so as to make it convenient for the greatest number of citizens to attend. Chapter 10 summarizes comments received at the series of public meetings, public hearings, and from survey and comment forms submitted.

## SECTION 6 – COMMUNITY VISION

In Section 6, discuss how the community's overall open space and recreation goals, or visions, were obtained and describe those goals in broad statements.

### A. *Description of Process*

Briefly describe the process used to determine what the citizens of the community value. The process could have been a series of public meetings, surveys, or questionnaires as mentioned in Section 2. These opinions, and the examination of trends and resources, should be used to guide the articulation of your community's overall goals.

### B. *Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals*

These goals should be stated in very general, broad-brush terms: what is the overall vision for the community and what should it look like? Be careful not to jump to specific objectives or actions yet. Stay at the "big picture" level at this point.

The goals should describe an "ideal" open space and recreation system that would meet the variety of needs that were expressed during the public participation process. They also may have been inferred from facility use, implied by local development policies or any other existing resource protection plans, or as a result of known facility deficiencies (as described in more detail in Section 7).

It is conceivable that the goals of your community may remain unchanged from previous open space and recreation plans. However, it is important to review the input received during the public participation process to determine whether there has been any shift in the public's sentiment.

### **Description of Process Ipswich Open Space and Recreation Plan**

The planning process for this document was far more extensive than for past open space plans because the town was engaged in intensive community planning during the entire life of the 2000 open space and recreation plan. As described in Section 7, three major reports were produced in that period: the Green Ring Report, the Ipswich Community Development Plan, and the Town Character Statement. The latter two entailed significant public input and all three address open space needs. The CDP, which resulted from years of deliberation by the Growth Management Steering Committee, incorporated the 2000 open space plan as an appendix so the two plans would be formally linked. The TCS was developed in large part through well-attended public workshops. The plan describes open space protection as a major goal of the town's citizens and contains numerous guidelines used in revising the goals and objectives of this open space plan.

The goals of the 2000 open space plan provided a logical starting point for determining the goals of this plan. The 2000-04 action items were analyzed to determine which had been accomplished, which had not, which had become irrelevant, and what new actions were needed. In conjunction with this analysis, the committee considered the guidelines of the TCS, the other reports mentioned above and previous surveys, and revised the seven goals of the 2000-04 open space plan into seven similar goals for this plan.

It is important that, in both the 1994 and 2000 open space plans, the Open Space Committee, with agreement of the appropriate boards and officials, assigned responsibilities for each action item. In general, this has helped to accomplish many of the action items by giving the committee leverage in getting responsible parties to act. It has also vastly improved communications between and among town officials, boards and committees regarding open space issues. In many cases, however, it has still fallen to the OSC to move issues to the front and force decisions. Consequently, action items and assignments are made this time with a more realistic view of what might actually be accomplished, and how the various board see and act on open space issues in relation to their other responsibilities.

## SECTION 8 – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In Section 8, the statement of vision and general goals from Section 6 and the data analyses from Section 7 are synthesized to create a comprehensive set of goals and objectives.

Begin by describing how you arrived at these goals and objectives. What did you hear citizens were looking for through the public participation process? Where do municipal employees feel there are holes in the system?

Be careful not to make a long list of planned actions here. Keep in mind the conceptual hierarchy: differentiate between the vision and goals (general concepts), objectives (concrete ideas for accomplishing goals within certain time frames), and actions to be discussed in Section 9 (specific activities that achieve the objectives). Appendix E, Land Protection Options, may help generate ideas and Appendix C, identifies some land trusts.

A goal of ADA accessibility of open space and recreational areas could be addressed here as well.

Please note that the categories developed as sections of the report are not necessarily the best outline for organizing and presenting your objectives. Go back to the community goals and organize your objectives into categories that fit appropriately.

During the planning process, your goals and objectives may be altered several times due to what you discover about your needs. The planning process is always cyclical.

### Goals and Objectives (partial listing) Yarmouth Open Space and Recreation Plan

The following list provides concrete objectives to meet the general goals identified in Section 6 of this Plan

1. Expand the amount of land that is presented as open space for natural resource protection, recreation activities, quality of life and aesthetics.
  - a. Commit unbuildable and suitable Town property to open space
  - b. Increase availability of open space areas for community use
2. Increase conservation and protection of scenic and environmental resources, rare species, and greenway corridor, wetland, and habitat protection through public/private sector cooperation.
  - a. Preserve open space in contributing areas for public water supply.
  - b. Enforce higher water quality and quantity standards for stormwater recharge and flood control throughout the community

## SECTION 9 – FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

In Section 9 you establish a year-by-year timetable for specific actions to accomplish the objectives listed in the previous chapter. Through this process, priorities are established based on goals and objectives. The action plan, in addition to establishing priorities, should identify specific tasks, the schedule for accomplishing them, a responsible party for implementing the action, and, where possible, a budget for accomplishing the task. All of this research will be instrumental during public meetings, when you may be trying to justify a Proposition 2 ½ override to acquire land, get approval for zoning changes, or implement the Community Preservation Act.

An Action Plan Map (Required Map 8) showing the desired results of your action plan should be included in this section. This can be a completely new map or it can be made by using a copy of the Inventory of Open Space Map (Required Map 7) with an overlay of clear acetate or mylar that highlights the areas needing additional protection, maintenance, etc. Please note that it may not be prudent to single out specific parcels for acquisition, but rather to highlight the general area. An example may be to shade the area along a river or trail corridor (a general buffer zone) rather than to identify specific landowners.

Specific projects required ensuring accessibility to all areas pursuant to ADA should be listed.

Again, avoid a long list of actions presented in a random order. With thoughtful organization, you can be sure that all important goals and objectives are being addressed and listed by relative priority. Probably the most effective organization is by goals and objectives, rather than by month. This way you can see whether you are giving preference to certain objectives at the expense of others. The sample below illustrates one way to do this.

There needs to be some flexibility assumed with the timetable. For example, a property may be put on the market earlier than anticipated. The Action Plan should allow early action if opportunities arise out of sequence.

Each year, the community (perhaps your newly-formed Open Space Committee or Community Preservation Committee) should evaluate implementation activities of the previous year and revise the Action Plan accordingly. To the extent that certain action items may not have been implemented from the previous plan, they should be carried over and re-prioritized if they are still relevant. This will make the formal five-year update an easier task. The update process is summarized in Appendix D.

It is recommended that as part of the five-year action plan, some entity be established to oversee management and implementation of the open space and recreation plan. As discussed above, it could be the existing open space committee or a new committee established pursuant to the Community Preservation Act as discussed below. Some communities have appointed a special committee comprised of representatives from several departments, boards and citizen committees. The goal is to have one group that has the responsibility of ensuring communication, coordination, and implementation.

### Open Space Acquisition Priorities

Any open space acquisition scheme – whether to preserve one acre or 10,000 – needs to address the issue of prioritization. Before any parcel is to be purchased, before any money is sought for preservation, the community must assess the natural values, recreation potential, and importance of the land to the community (both objective and subjective measurements) and determine in advance which lands are the highest priorities to preserve. Such an approach contrasts sharply with the piecemeal, ad hoc decision-making processes that so often determine open space acquisitions.

Given the large acreage of land currently either in Chapter 61, 61A or 61B, it is important to establish criteria that will assist your city or town in prioritizing parcels that become available. This right of first refusal also can be transferred to a non-profit conservation organization, so it is important to know how to work cooperatively with these organizations. Thus, communities have another option if municipal purchase is unlikely.

Tax title land falls into a similar category. Once such parcels have been identified, they can be evaluated to determine whether they should be preserved or sold.

**Open Space Acquisition and the Community Preservation Act**

The Community Preservation Act (Chapter 267 of the Acts of 2000) provides communities with a tool to fund open space and recreation land acquisitions, as well as park development projects. The Act provides a local option for municipalities to adopt property tax surcharges of up to 3% to fund open space acquisition, affordable housing, and historic preservation activities. Communities adopting such measures will also qualify for state matching funds from the Department of Revenue's Community Preservation Trust Fund.

Guidelines are available from EOEEA to describe the process by which a municipality can implement the Act ([www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org)). The basic process is outlined below:

1. The Town Meeting or City Council adopts the CPA (may be initiated by a petition drive);
2. The exact amount of property tax surcharge (up to 3%) is set;
3. The CPA is submitted to local voters as a ballot question;
4. A Community Preservation Committee is appointed;

5. The Committee conducts a public process to recommend CPA projects;
6. The Town Meeting or City Council authorizes spending on particular projects (on an annual basis; at least 10% each must be used for affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space/recreation projects); and
7. The community notifies the Department of Revenue that the CPA has been adopted and qualifies for a yearly State CPA grant (in the first 5 years of the law, over \$180 million has been distributed to cities and towns, with all matching at the 100% level during these years).

# APPENDIX J: BEST PRACTICES IN COMMUNICATION

## The Trust for Public Land Community Engagement and Facilitation Best Practices

**WHY** do it? What are the benefits of community engagement?

- 1) Decisions better reflect community values
- 2) Greater commitment and willingness from the community to support implementation

**WHEN** should I do it?

- 1) Community wants to create a publicly-supported vision for parks, open space, and recreation
- 2) Community “buy-in” (decision acceptance) is needed to finance or implement land protection and park creation strategies.

**WHEN** should I **not** do it?

- 1) When there is a clear need and opportunity and buy-in isn't necessary for implementation
- 2) If decisions that have already been made have buy-in because they have been tested with widely-trusted stakeholders
- 3) If public education or marketing alone is the primary goal. In this case, the community assumes that substantive decisions have already been made and will not participate.

**HOW** do I do it?

### Best Practices in Community Engagement

- 1) **Work with a carefully selected representative stakeholder group**
  - a) Creating a stakeholder group that reflects the whole community is critical.
  - b) Inviting the general public is OK, but only in addition to invited stakeholders
  - c) Selection for the stakeholder group should be based on
    - i) who is influential with specific segments of the population. If you only have time to engage with a fraction of the population, those who you invite to participate must be influential *and* represent diverse community values
    - ii) whose buy-in will be needed to implement the plans

2) **Focus on values**

What do people cherish most? What do they hope to leave behind for their children or younger siblings? What is most

important to them? Actively help participants articulate their interests, not merely their positions.

**3) Model respectful inquiry and exploration**

Use a calm question like “What do you mean by that?” to understand someone’s point.

**4) Build on local expertise and existing initiatives**

- a) Build on clearly defined problems or opportunities that are salient and already the focus of public attention
- b) Involve leaders of related initiatives and local technical experts
- c) Coordinate planning to overlap whenever possible

**5) Create shared knowledge**

- a) Pool local and outside knowledge and expertise. Share knowledge of best practices so the community can contribute in a thoughtful and meaningful way.
- b) Come to agreement on current conditions, issues, or challenges.

**6) Organize a technical group**

- a) Keep highly technical discussions for a technical audience. Share the overall results in updates or at community meetings.
- b) Create public sessions with teams of experts when possible. This is a good strategy for attracting additional participants, learning about and testing new ideas, gathering feedback, and exploring ideas with neutral experts.

**7) Move beyond meetings**

Get out of the meeting room and onto the land whenever possible. Visit sites, walk potential greenway trails, and meet in fun places.

**8) Use visual tools**

Have relevant maps and other visual tools to focus discussion and reinforce the facts of the meeting. Allow participants to manipulate and create maps whenever possible.

**9) Have substantive opportunities for input every time you engage with citizens**

The purpose and goals of a meeting should always be clear and important. If not, cancel the meeting.

**10) Tell stories**

Stories are the best way for people to communicate in groups. They are also very good for putting context to technical or

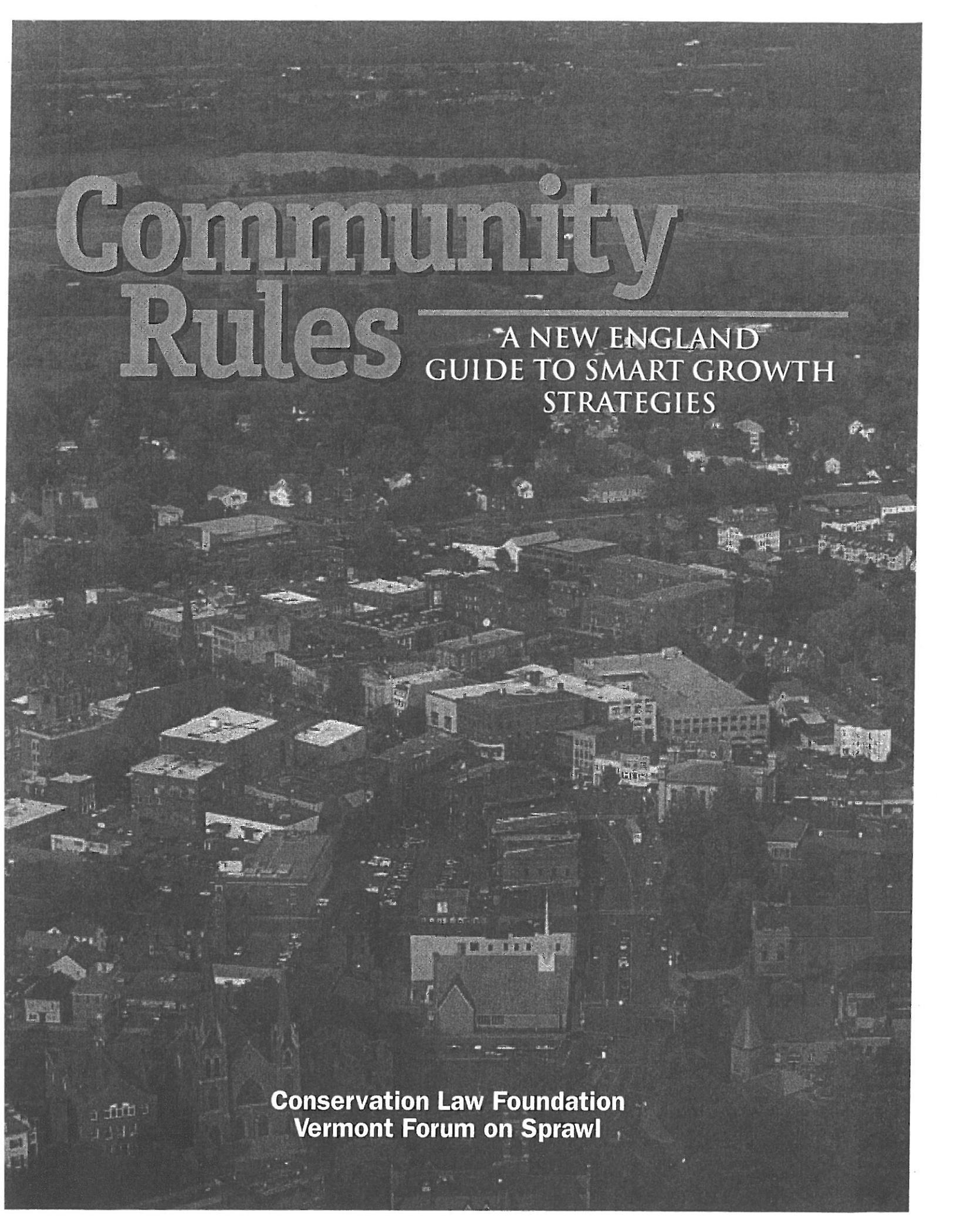
scientific data.

**11) Explicitly articulate outcomes**

At the start of the process and before each meeting, articulate the desired outcomes as clearly as possible. Commit to achieving those outcomes. Use time constraints as a motivator for consensus. At the end, always summarize key decisions and state next steps.

**12) Maintain momentum and create strong endings**

Don't allow the process to wander too long or drift off. Have a clearly defined ending. Combine final meetings with celebrations, public announcements, or important guests to close the process. Thank people for their participation and consider inviting them to participate in further planning or implementation. Summarize what's been learned and what needs to happen next to ensure implementation.



# Community Rules

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A NEW ENGLAND  
GUIDE TO SMART GROWTH  
STRATEGIES

Conservation Law Foundation  
Vermont Forum on Sprawl

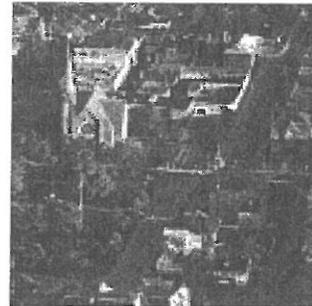
# Community Rules

A NEW ENGLAND GUIDE  
TO SMART GROWTH STRATEGIES

**Bennet Heart**  
**Elizabeth Humstone**  
**Thomas F. Irwin**  
**Sandy Levine**  
**Dano Weisbord**



# What Will Become of the Land We Love?



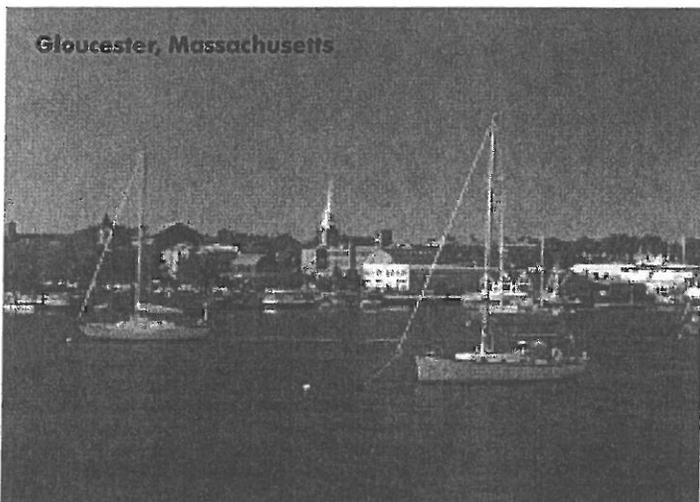
**N**ew England holds a special place in the hearts and minds of many people across this country, and throughout the world. While there are a number of reasons for this, it is surely the case that the region's physical environment is a strong element of what is captivating about it. By physical environment, we speak not necessarily of the "natural" environment of New England (although there are certainly some areas of great beauty that are now relatively undisturbed by man), but rather of the distinctive way that man and nature co-exist here.

The relationship between the people and the land in New England has evolved over many centuries of settlement on this diverse landscape. Today, New England has an abundance of places where man-made and natural environments gracefully co-exist.

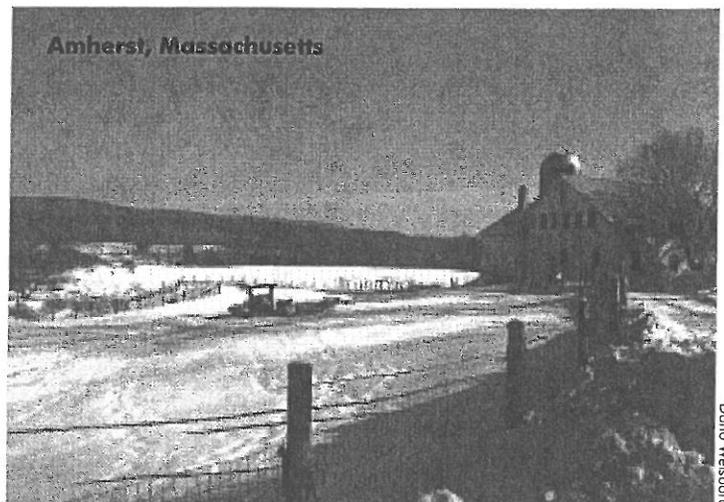
The economic well-being of New England is inextricably connected to its physical well-being. In one obvious example, the fishing industry depends on the quality of the waters and the protection of habitat. In a more complex example, the development of open space and farmland offers economic rewards to developers and homebuyers, but may strain municipal budgets and

displace valuable economic resources. For while people and capital are drawn to this region for all sorts of reasons – many of them related to the presence of institutions, enterprises, and talent pools in our increasingly knowledge-based economy—the quality of our environment is one of our greatest *economic* assets.

Like most relationships, the one between the people and the land of New England needs nurturing to flourish. Much of what we have to be proud, in terms of our physical environment, we had the good fortune to inherit from our forbears. That we will always have such places here is by no means assured.



Alexandra K. Scott



Dana Weisbord

For the region to retain its charm, and for our generation to do its part by leaving New England better than we found it, we must take an active interest in how the land is developed.

New England has experienced a period of economic prosperity over the better part of the last decade. With economic growth, comes growth in the form of new homes, new office buildings, new roads, and new stores. Development, depending on what it is, where it is sited, and how it is designed, can add or detract in various ways. Rarely is it all good or all bad. But what is built, where it is sited, and how it is designed, ends up making a real difference in how New England looks and feels, and how it functions, both economically and environmentally.

## A Citizen Planner's Guidebook

This guidebook is intended to help the citizens of New England play a more affirmative role in the evolution of their communities. Our principal intended readers are citizen planners: those serving on local boards and commissions, citizens concerned about the well-being of their towns. Especially in New England, where town meetings play a key role in local government, citizens who take an active interest in the future of their communities have the opportunity to shape their development. While this guide-

### A Word about Terminology

Because this guidebook deals with different states, there are bound to be some differences in terminology. For example, zoning laws are called bylaws, rules, regulations, or ordinances, depending on the state. We have tried to use terms that have broad usage, and where terms are first used we have tried to identify synonymous terms.



**Bristol, Vermont. From the *Heart of the Green Mountains*, a Rutland Railroad Company promotional booklet, 1897.**

Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

book is written by New Englanders, for New Englanders, we anticipate that it will be of interest outside the region, as we address a topic that is on the minds of many people across the United States.

The focus of this guidebook is on how to steer development on a better course in our towns and cities, through improved local planning, regulations, and permitting, with a particular focus on regulations (often called bylaws or ordinances). Local regulations in New England, and the rest of the country, have for some time now been steering us off course, encouraging and sometimes even *requiring* sprawl development. This need not be so. New Englanders can and should take steps to develop their region in a manner consistent with its character and environmental well-being. One key way to accomplish this is by changing local regulations so they foster more sustainable development. Some communities in New England, and elsewhere, have altered their local regulations to promote this “smart growth,” and we highlight many of these examples.

While many citizen planners have collections of zoning laws from other

towns (increasingly through easy access on the internet), we perceive a need for a resource to supply conceptual building blocks for better bylaws. Therefore, what we do is articulate *standards*—those that we believe should be the underpinning of rules that guide development more in keeping with traditional settlement patterns. We then discuss different regulatory tools that can be deployed to achieve these standards, and offer many examples of communities that have implemented these tools. Throughout the guidebook, we offer practical strategies for realizing these regulatory reforms.

The guidebook is organized as follows: In Chapters 1 and 2 we discuss how sprawl development is altering New England; how there are multiple, interrelated causes of sprawl; and how reforming local regulation is part of a “symphony of solutions” that must be conducted to discourage sprawl. In Chapters 3 through 6 we explain how, by changing the rules that guide development, communities can make it more sustainable. There are three appendices: a “tool kit” that gives helpful descriptions of a number of important regulatory mechanisms; a matrix on the constraints

and opportunities for local land use regulation presented by New England's different state laws; and at the end of the guidebook there is a resources section that tracks the chapters, with references to the many helpful books, articles, and websites upon which we relied.

### **New England in the Age of Sprawl**

Sprawl has been the dominant trend in land use over the last half century in New England, and across America. It is low-density, largely single-use development, on the periphery of cities and towns, and increasingly in our rural areas, designed to be accessed by automobiles and trucks. Sprawl is occurring at different paces around the country, but it is undoubtably happening. Some of its most recognizable forms are strip development along major arterial roads; self-contained, large lot residential subdivisions that "leapfrog" into previously undeveloped areas; and suburban office parks and shopping malls with park-

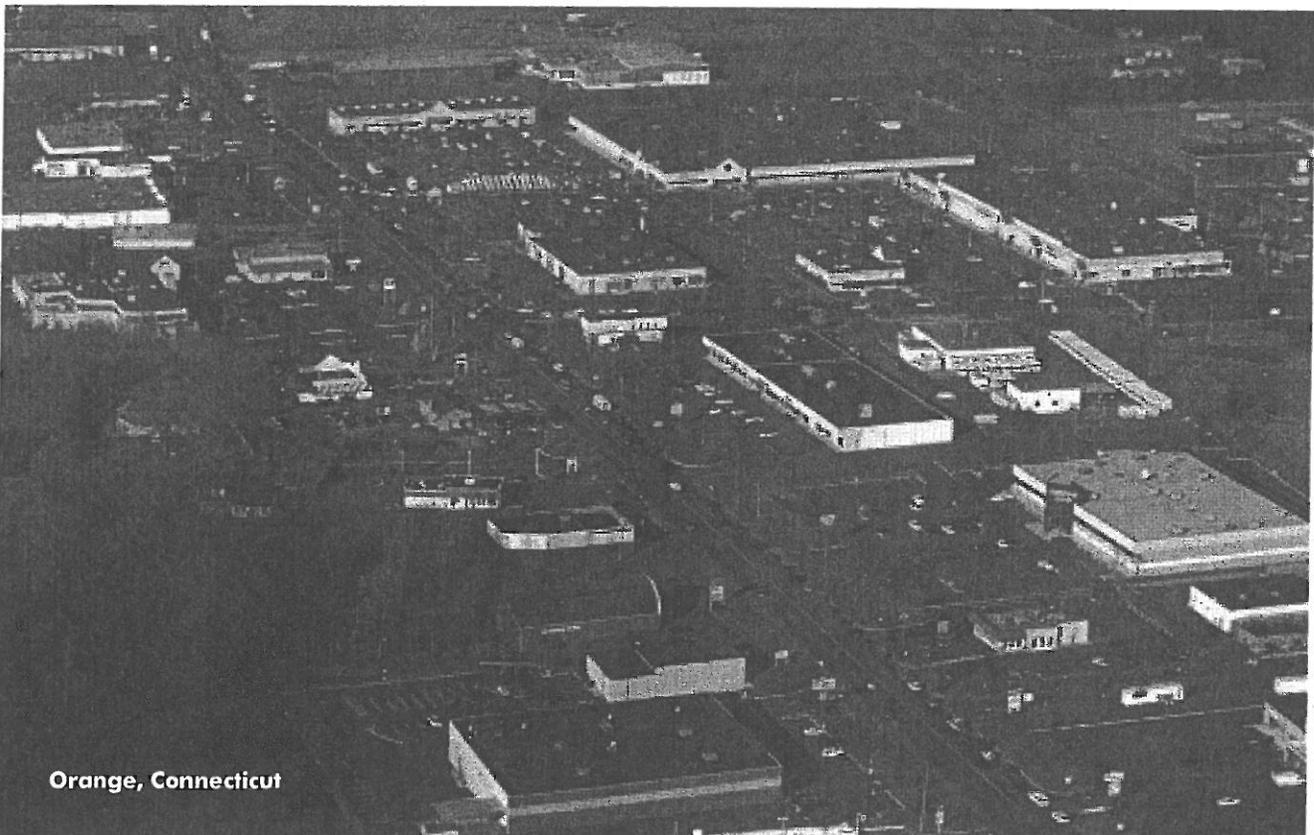
#### **This guidebook demonstrates how local regulations can be put to use to do the following:**

- Concentrate development in existing town centers and new, planned growth centers
- Allow and encourage a vibrant mix of land uses
- Encourage infill development and higher densities where appropriate
- Provide a pedestrian-friendly environment
- Promote a range of transportation options
- Sustain areas where the primary uses are agriculture, forestry, and open space
- Encourage diversity of compatible resource-related activities in rural areas
- Protect important natural resources
- Create residential developments that provide for diverse housing opportunities, take up less space, provide for open spaces, minimize traffic, and connect to other parts of the community
- Manage land use and access along highway corridors
- Encourage retail developments at a scale appropriate to the community

ing lots aplenty. Sprawl can be distinguished from traditional, compact development in a number of ways, as set forth in Figure 1 (page 4). Not all suburban and rural development is sprawl. Development can be, and fortunate-

ly sometimes is, sited in the suburbs and in rural areas in a more sustainable, compact manner than is commonplace today.

Over the last half-century, residents and businesses have been spreading



**Orange, Connecticut**

**Figure 1: Characteristics of Compact Development vs. Sprawl**

Compact Development:	Sprawl:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Higher density than surrounding areas</li> <li>■ Mixed uses</li> <li>■ Development with pedestrian, bike, transit and auto access</li> <li>■ Public facilities, services and spaces</li> <li>■ Open space, including productive farm and forestland, surrounding compact development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Large-lot residential developments</li> <li>■ Low average densities, compared to town centers</li> <li>■ Development requiring an automobile</li> <li>■ Fragmented open space</li> <li>■ Separation of uses</li> <li>■ Lack of public spaces and community centers</li> <li>■ "Big box" commercial development</li> <li>■ Large paved areas, wide roads, more roads, large parking areas</li> </ul>

Source: Vermont Forum on Sprawl, *Exploring Sprawl*, No. 2 (Burlington, Vt: 1999)

away from the nuclei of New England's cities and town centers to outlying fields and forests, developing generous swaths of land as they make their new homes, office parks, commercial strips, and shopping centers. Consider just a few indicators of New England sprawl:

**Rapid land consumption.** Land is being developed at a rate well in excess of the rate of population growth in all of the New England states. Figure 2 compares population growth and land development in the New England states over the last twenty years.

**Growth on the outskirts.** Growth is by and large not occurring on undeveloped parcels in previously settled areas. The Vermont Forum on Sprawl (VFOS) divided Vermont's communities into four categories: traditional centers, new-growth towns, outlying towns, and resort towns. As shown in Figure 3, VFOS found that over the last 50 years nearly 60% of Vermont's population increase occurred in new-growth towns, with roughly another 28% occurring in outlying towns. Similarly, in Massachusetts the highest percentage population changes over the last ten years have occurred in outlying towns along Interstate 495.

**Life on the road.** As we New Englanders spread further and further apart, we find ourselves having to drive more and more to get where we want to go. In Rhode Island, over the last

two decades, the population grew by 6.8%, but the number of registered motor vehicles grew by 17%—two and a half times the rate of population growth. In Vermont, while population has grown 33% over nearly thirty years, the annual vehicle miles traveled by Vermonters has more than doubled. Sprawl is made possible by the automobile, and the automobile is made a necessity by sprawl.

Other data, including data on hous-

ing units per person, average home size, the influx of big box retail stores, parking spaces per square foot of retail or office space, and roadway miles per person, all tell the same story: we are continually expanding outward from our cities and town centers, and we are consuming more and more space on a per capita basis as we do so.

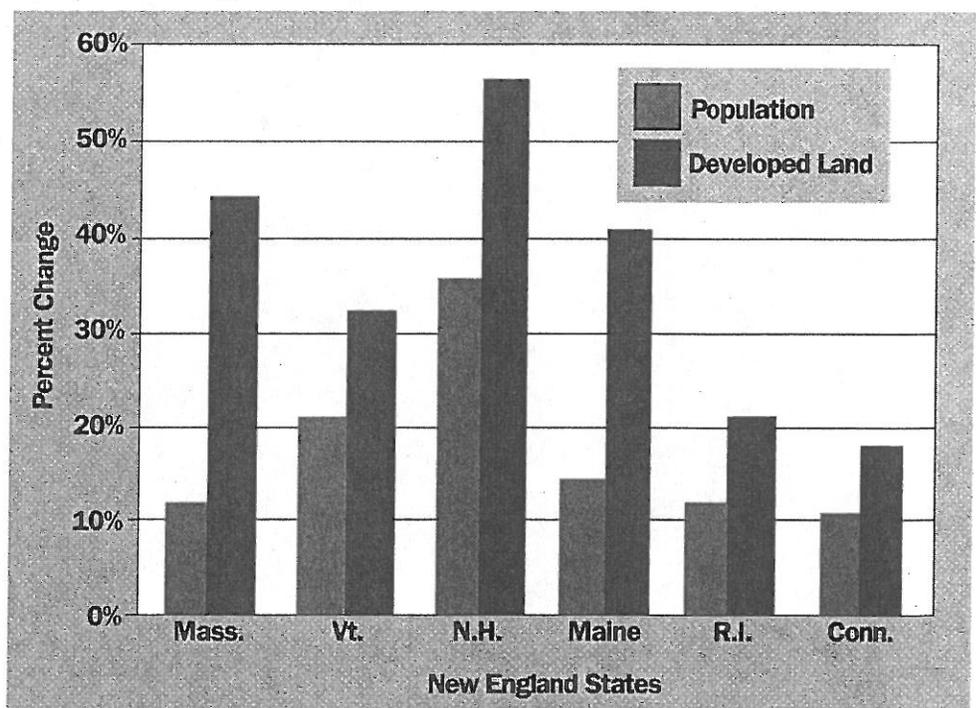
**What are the costs of sprawl?**

Much has been written on the costs of sprawl. (See references in resources section.) To say that they exist is not to say that no people and institutions benefit in some respects from the phenomenon. But those who benefit in some respects are usually paying in others. Sprawl is, at bottom, a very inefficient way to develop land. What follows is a brief summary of its serious economic, environmental, and social costs.

**Economic costs of sprawl**

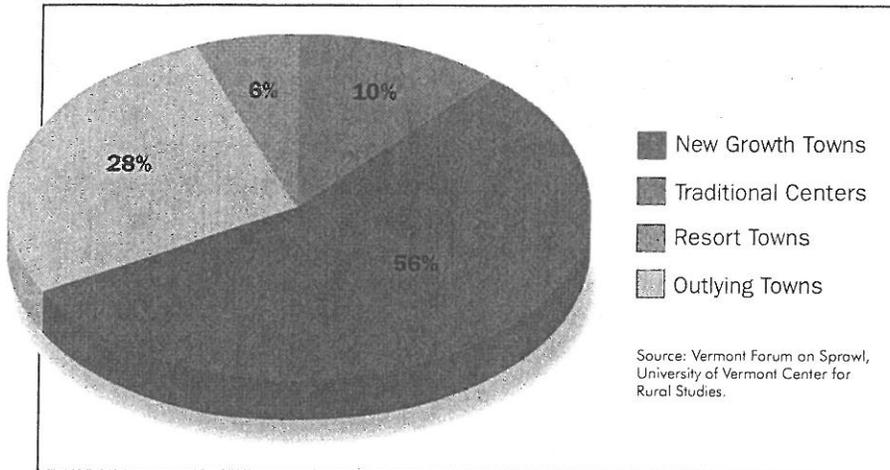
- Cities have lost huge portions of their tax base and employment, while facing rising costs for deteri-

**Figure 2: A Comparison of Population and Development Growth Rates in New England 1980-2000**



Source: U.S. Census and the Natural Resource Conservation Service

**Figure 3: Share of Vermont Population Growth by Town Type, 1950–2000**



erating services and facilities. They have been the big losers from suburbanization (sprawl and otherwise). The departure of people and businesses has contributed to huge losses in assessed valuations. A disproportionate number of people with lower incomes and in need of social services live in cities. The combined effect of a dwindling tax base and costly human services forces cities to impose high tax rates, which drive away more people and businesses. The higher costs associated with sprawl development are ultimately passed on to broad numbers of ratepayers and taxpayers, including city dwellers. Underutilized urban infrastructure is a wasted asset.

- Suburbs have seen rising municipal costs with the growth in population, commerce, and industry. The arrival of residents with children is a money-losing proposition in many instances, requiring that more services (mostly schooling) and infrastructure be paid for by taxes (see accompanying box on cost of community services studies). Figure 4 shows the relationship between the exodus of people from the cities to the suburbs. Some inner-ring suburbs are experiencing

the same drain of people and capital as cities.

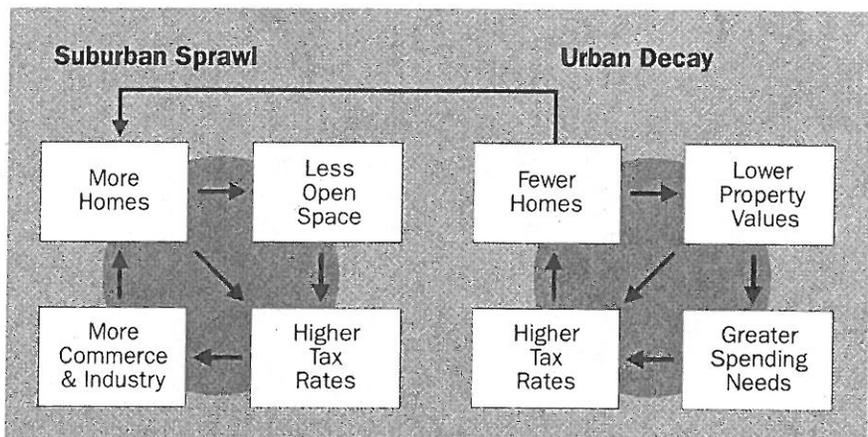
- The costs of driving are greatly increased by sprawl. Traffic congestion and delay, a major by-product of sprawl, hurts employee productivity. More roads mean more money to build and maintain roads. Increased driving means increased costs to society from vehicle accidents. Increased distances between land uses typically require second cars in two-adult households.
- Sprawl wreaks economic havoc on farming. One farm after another is converted into subdivisions, strip malls, or office parks, gradually

eroding the critical mass of farms needed to support farm-related services that sustain farming communities.

**Environmental costs of sprawl**

- The most far-reaching cost of sprawl is the production of heat trapping gases by motor vehicles, most notably carbon dioxide, that contribute to global warming. The United States, with just 5% of the world’s population, emits over one quarter of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, and more than one third of those emissions comes from the transportation sector. Diesel-powered vehicles, which include most buses and trucks, emit harmful particulate matter. Cars are also responsible for significant water pollution from road runoff fouled by car emissions and fluids, as well as from improperly disposed motor oil.
- The large building “footprints” and generously applied pavement of sprawl create abundant impermeable surfaces that thwart groundwater recharge, collect nonpoint source pollution that is delivered to our water bodies, and contribute to erosion and flooding.
- New roads and development fragment wildlife habitat,

**Figure 4: A graphic representation of the relationship between urban decay and suburban sprawl.**



Reprinted from *The Costs of Suburban Sprawl and Urban Decay in Rhode Island*. Prepared for Grow Smart Rhode Island.

- Valuable natural resources, such as prime agricultural soils and productive woodlands, are lost to development.

**Social costs of sprawl**

- While many people pursue the American Dream of a place in the countryside to call their own, they often find themselves without community. There are places where the nearest thing to a town center is a shopping mall with no real sense of place, and where there is very little civic life.

- Sprawl development typically does not offer a variety of housing types at a wide range of prices, leading to social stratification.
- As jobs and housing become separated further and further, many workers have extremely long commutes, which cut into time that could be spent with family and friends, or on community activities.
- There is a cultural loss when we lose our farmlands and open spaces, and too much of what is built in the suburbs is ugly and dispiriting.
- There is increasing evidence of

- health problems associated with sedentary lifestyles in which car trips are replacing walking trips. The loss of open space, recreation areas, and access to wild places can lead to stress and other psychological and health problems.
- Elderly, disabled, and young people find themselves stranded with no means of getting to friends, shops, and services.

**What causes sprawl?**

Many factors have contributed to our sprawling development style (see the resources section for a number of good

**Cost of Community Services Studies**

Different kinds of development demand different levels of community services, such as schools, police, water, sewer, and roads. The American Farmland Trust, a non-profit organization dedicated to curbing the loss of productive farmland, has documented a number of "costs of community services studies" in many New England towns. These studies show that residential development tends to cost more to towns in services than it pays in taxes and fees, and that commercial properties, undeveloped land, and farmland tend to pay more into municipal coffers than they cost in services.

Cost of community services studies have some limitations, however:

- Cost of community services studies often do not address secondary effects of development, such as development induced by commercial development. In Montgomery County, Maryland this issue was examined and it was determined that while increased business activities alone produced positive fiscal impacts, when employee residents were included in the calculation, the positive impacts were greatly reduced to the point where some kinds of commercial development produced a net fiscal deficit.
- Cost of community services studies often do not measure impacts of their projects on surrounding towns. Some studies have shown that in slow-growth areas, the benefits of commercial development in one community are more than offset by the costs from reduced retail sales and declining employment in other communities.
- Most studies assume that all residential development is alike. Since school costs are far and away the biggest town budget item associated with new residential development, it obviously matters from a financial standpoint whether or not the new residents include school age chil-

dren. By encouraging a diversity of housing types—single family homes, duplexes, townhouses, apartments—clustered in and around village centers, towns can appeal to a diversity of people with different housing needs while minimizing community services costs.

- There is a risk that people will erect barriers to certain types of housing in the name of fiscal responsibility. Every community needs to do its part to provide a diversity of housing stock for people of all income levels, including the elderly and people with disabilities.

Other studies show that it is less expensive to provide services to compact development than to low-density or sprawl development. This is principally the result of reduced infrastructure costs (construction and maintenance) for shorter roads and water and sewer lines. The chart below shows the cost of compact development as a percentage of the cost of sprawl development in three studies.

**Compact Development Cost as Percent of Sprawl Development Cost**

■ Findings from Three Major Studies

Study by:	Sprawl Development	Duncan (1989)	Frank (1989)	Burchell (1992-97)
		Compact Development		
Roads (local)	100%	40%	73%	74-88%
Schools	100%	93%	99%	97%
Utilities	100%	60%	66%	86-93%

Burchell's 1992 study of New Jersey development trends concluded that New Jersey municipalities could save up to \$1.4 billion and conserve about 175,000 acres over a period of twenty years through more compact development.

Natick, Massachusetts



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publications on the subject). It is important to distinguish between suburban growth and sprawl. Not all growth equals sprawl and some suburban and rural areas have absorbed growth in a sustainable way. What follows is a summary of factors that have contributed to sprawl:

#### Historic causes

- Desire to escape from noxious urban industrial conditions
- Government loan programs and tax policies that favor suburban home building
- Rise of the automobile and the creation of the interstate highway system
- Desire for safe neighborhoods and better schools
- Racial prejudice—"White flight"

#### The affordable automobile

- Highways and other roads paid for by taxpayers, not drivers
- Low price of gasoline
- Lack of effective alternatives to the automobile

#### Government infrastructure practices & economic policies

- Federal, state, and municipal road building
- Sewer and water system expansions

- School building practices that favor new construction on "campus" size parcels
- Rail expansion without coordinated planning for associated development
- Development subsidies for low density suburban developments

#### Local policies and regulations

- Out-of-date zoning and subdivision laws that segregate uses and disallow compact development

### Statewide Education Property Tax

**B**oth New Hampshire and Vermont recently passed statewide education property taxes. These taxes were created in response to judicial decisions in each state finding that the previous systems of mostly town funded education was unfair to people living in poor communities. As a result of New Hampshire's and Vermont's statewide education property taxes, towns may not be as likely to seek to grow their property tax bases through increased development. For as towns increase their property tax bases, they also increase their tax liability to the state. To the extent commercial developments could, in the past, be marketed to towns on the basis that they would generate local property tax revenue to benefit local schools, the statewide property tax systems weakens such an argument.

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- Building codes that discourage rehabilitation of existing buildings

### **Municipalities' heavy reliance on property tax**

- Municipalities raising the bulk of their funds to pay for schools and other municipal services with local property tax revenues (*See box.*)
- High urban property-tax rates made necessary by dwindling tax bases and by high percentages of residents in need of social services that encourage "flight" to suburbs

### **Availability of land**

- Land is typically cheaper as one moves out from the center
- Greater availability of sizeable parcels in outlying areas
- Greater availability of uncontaminated parcels in outlying areas

### **Market forces**

- People in the development business—developers, builders, architects, lenders, among others—are accustomed to sprawl development
- Peoples' desire for better schools, more green space, less crime, more "elbow room", and lower tax rates
- Many people are products of suburbia and have little experience with cities or town centers
- Many people perceive suburbs, at least certain suburbs, to be good places to invest in real estate due to the apparent stability of certain factors (e.g., low crime, good schools, high-quality housing stock)

### **Costs of development**

- Lower development costs for new development (In the suburbs, developers are more likely to be able to: build shorter buildings with larger floor plates than in cities or town centers; build surface, rather than structured, parking; and get permitting through more quickly, all of which is cheaper)



**Mashpee Commons, Mashpee, Massachusetts. A village-style development built on the site of a defunct mall.**

Courtesy of Mashpee Commons Limited Partnership

- Difficulties arising from neighbors' concerns with infill development can drag out the permit process, adding to costs

### **Weakness of farming and forestry sectors**

- Stronger farming and forestry sectors would enhance the value of land for these uses and would provide an economic bulwark against sprawl

## **How to grow from here**

**W**e can build great and sustainable places. In *The Geography of Nowhere*, an influential book on sprawl, James Howard Kunstler observes that in the age of sprawl, *development* has become a dirty word. This should not be so. We can grow in ways that fit with our traditional patterns of settlement, and that enhance already sprawled areas. We can build great places to live, work, and recreate, places that have character, and that are environmentally sustainable. There are tremendous opportunities for developing in ways that complement

existing development, that revitalize areas, that help make places great. Good local land use laws can set the stage for great and sustainable development.

Despite all the factors inducing sprawl, there is a burgeoning counter-trend. More and more people are seeking out cities, traditional town centers, or suburban developments with some of the attributes of town centers, what some call "traditional neighborhood design" (TND) communities, as alternatives to sprawl. Among the reasons some people choose cities, town centers, or TND communities are the following:

- Lively places to live, work, shop, recreate
- Greater sense of community
- Places with character
- Greater social diversity
- A less car-intensive lifestyle
- More and better cultural venues
- Centrally located; roads and in some cases rail lines converge
- Good transit service
- Housing that fits one's needs
- Pedestrian-friendly environments
- Public spaces

- Nearby retail, including locally owned businesses
- Nearby employment opportunities
- Proximity to clients, services, business partners, etc.

A growing body of evidence indicates that there is significant unmet demand for more compact, livable communities. In a recent survey commissioned by the Maine State Planning Office, 43% of Maine homebuyers living in rural or conventional suburban settings (37% of the total home-buying market) were determined to be good targets for traditional neighborhood development. An influential annual analysis of the trends in the national real-estate market has observed that since 1995 “suburban degeneration” is influencing more people to seek out “smart growth” communities. In 1996, 70% of those polled by the market research firm American LIVES said that they preferred pedestrian-oriented, community gathering places, and close-by shopping.

In addition to this survey data and market analysis, demographics suggest an unmet demand for more housing options. Only 9% of all households in the United States have two parents and two children under 18 years old at home. Households with empty-nesters, low-income families, single parents, young people starting out in the workplace, and the elderly have different housing needs. This demand for alternatives to the conventional suburban setting is likely to increase as the American population ages. The Census Bureau projects that in fifty years the United States will have twice the number of people over 65 that we have today.

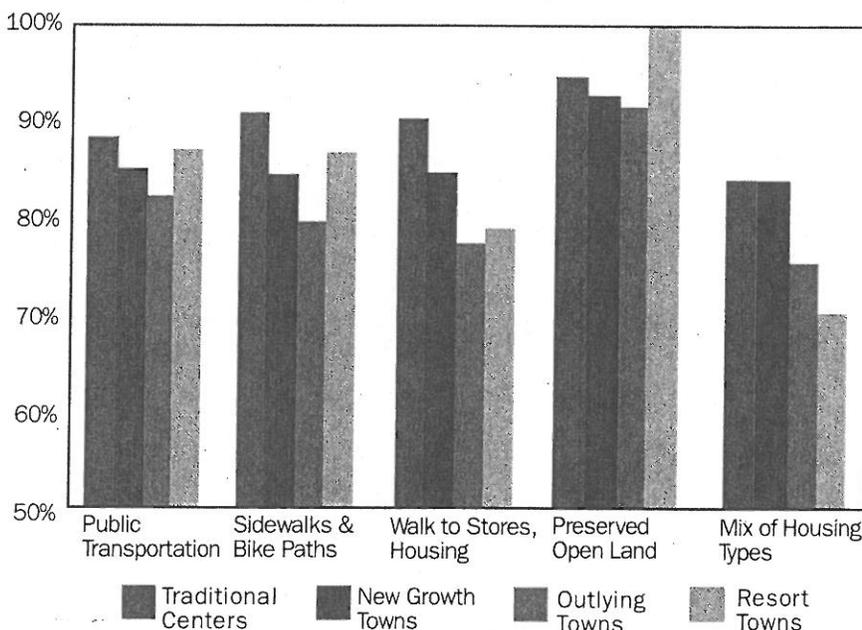
Communities and developers are now working to meet the demand for more compact, livable communities. In Providence, Rhode Island, the Armory Revival Company built or rehabilitated approximately 150 single- and multi-family homes in an established but dis-

tressed neighborhood in Providence. In Mashpee, Massachusetts, developers Buff Chase and Douglas Storrs have been building a traditional neighborhood development on the site of a defunct shopping mall. And in the City of South Burlington, Vermont, efforts are underway to create a high-density center with a new city hall, a post office, multi-family housing, retail and office space, and parks. Community development corporations and community land trusts throughout the country have generally built housing that fills an important need for decent, affordable housing and is also consistent with smart-growth thinking.

Good local land use laws are an important step to set the stage and create incentives for smart growth. Take Auburn, Maine, for example. Over forty years ago, Auburn established an agricultural zone that includes roughly 50% of the town’s 66 square miles. New houses are only allowed in this zone when at least 50% of household income comes from farming. While some strips along roads have been taken out of the zone, the zone has held up over time to protect Auburn farming. Or consider

Amherst, Massachusetts, where a number of zoning techniques are being deployed to foster smart growth. In Amherst, there is a village center bylaw that allows for a mix of uses in various designated village center areas. This bylaw allowed for the opening of a popular inn in one of these village centers. Amherst also has a cluster subdivision bylaw that includes a density bonus for affordable housing. This bylaw has been utilized by at least two developers to build attractively clustered homes with some affordable units, including one highly successful co-housing development with 40% affordable units. Amherst also has a farm-stand restaurant bylaw that has enabled at least one farmer to augment his farming operations by running a restaurant. And in Charlotte, Vermont, the town has zoned for limited access to Route 7 which runs through the town and, as a result, has stopped strip development at its borders. The wide-open expanses of farmland with sweeping views of Lake Champlain have attracted the attention of private philanthropists and others who have now contributed to the permanent protection of this scenic corridor.

**Figure 5: Vermont poll showing broad support for smart growth elements**



Vermont Forum on Sprawl, Poll on Community Value and Sprawl, 1998

## Time Is of the Essence

Sprawl has crept up on us over the decades, and has already transformed many of our communities in both obvious and not so obvious ways. If we do nothing to change the laws and economic drivers that foster sprawl, it will continue to spread, and we will sustain further economic, environmental, and social damage as a result. Some people may chalk it up to progress, or changing times, but as we demonstrate throughout the pages of this book, progress in the form of new development need not equal sprawl. While fostering smart growth instead of sprawl requires a multi-pronged effort—the subject of the next chapter—there is no doubt that one of the most significant steps for towns in New England is to ensure that local regulations call



Dana Washburn

**Amherst, Massachusetts. A co-housing development.**

for sensible, sustainable development. people in towns across New England  
It is our hope that this guidebook will help and elsewhere take this important step.

## The Perils of Model Bylaws

*Land use law expert Joel Russell makes the following observations about model bylaws:*

There is an understandable desire to be able to take a “model bylaw” and plug it into an existing zoning code. Unfortunately, this often does more harm than good for the following reasons:

- Zoning bylaws are almost never written on a clean slate. There is always a body of existing bylaws, regulations, and practices in which any new provisions must fit. Each bylaw has evolved over time, in response to the specific conditions, geography, economics and politics of a particular place. One cannot simply graft in a section written for someplace else, or no place in particular, and expect it to work within the specific context of a given bylaw.
- Frequently, the best way to improve a town’s zoning bylaw is to amend a dozen or more interrelated and dispersed sections, sometimes in minor ways and sometimes

in major ways. There is no way to design a model bylaw that can do this.

- Zoning bylaws tend to grow by the accretion of new provisions designed to solve perceived new problems. The result is an increasingly complex body of regulations in which each attempt to solve a problem usually creates new problems and introduces inconsistencies. A better result can often be achieved by simply modifying the sections that are causing the problems, rather than keeping them and adding a new layer of complexity.
- The only effective way to make a bylaw work better is to determine what works and what does not in a particular bylaw section, in terms of what kind of development has resulted, or can be predicted to result, from implementation of the bylaw. Model bylaws may be useful to provide ideas or suggested standards, but they can rarely if ever be inserted intact, or with only minor modifications, into an existing bylaw.

# A Symphony of Solutions



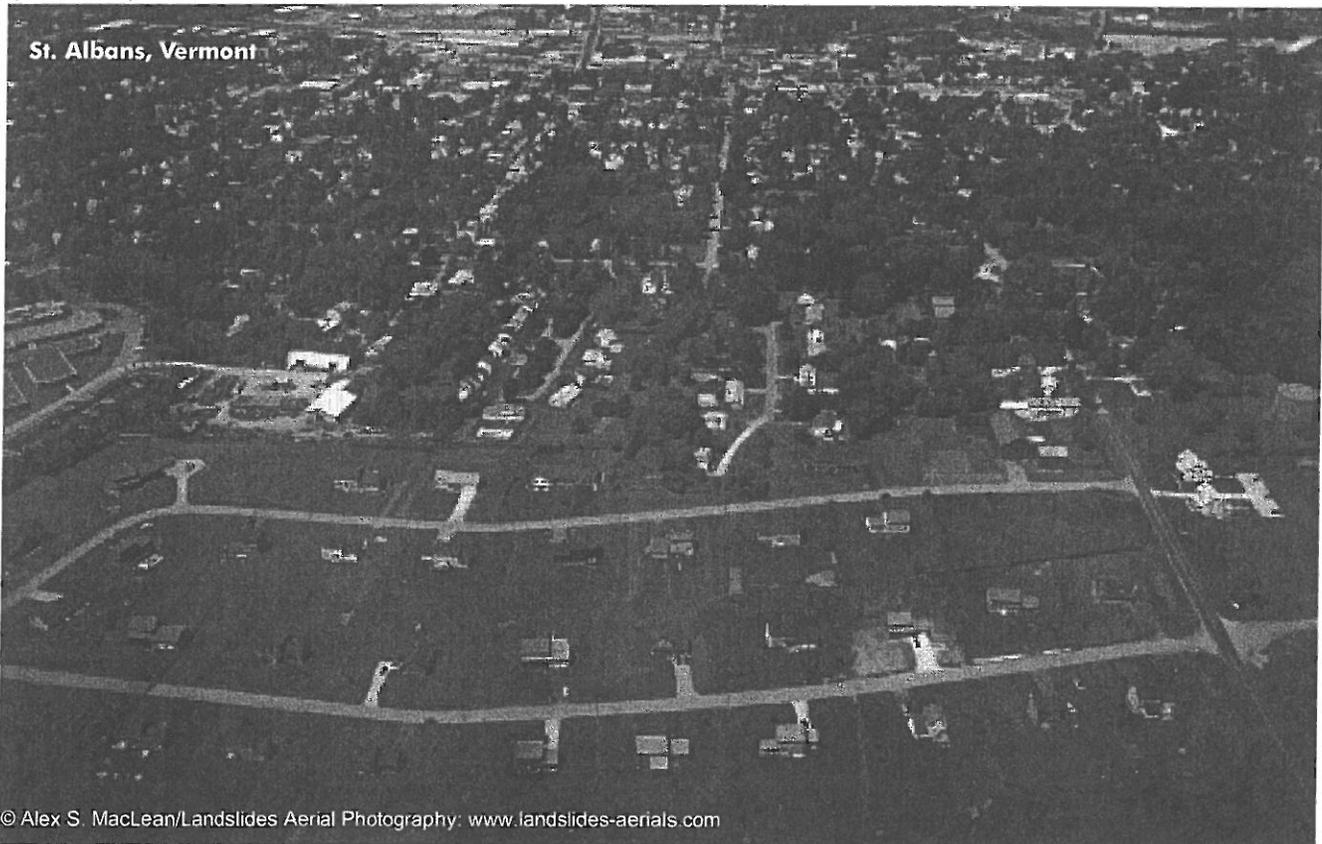
**J**ust as there are multiple factors that lead to sprawl, there are multiple methods to prevent it. Individual choices about where to live, where to shop, and what form of transportation to use; corporate policies on where to locate businesses; municipal decisions about how to regulate development; and federal, state and local policy and spending, can all influence patterns of growth

in communities. For this reason, the most effective strategies are those that are taken on many fronts in a coordinated way. Towns also have an opportunity to coordinate their planning, regulations, public investments, and tax policies with neighboring towns to achieve smart growth.

A sound approach to smart growth in your town will meet today's market challenges, as well as those anticipated

in the future. For years it has been assumed that consumers want large lots for homes in the countryside, widely spaced industrial and office campuses, and big box stores and shopping malls with plenty of free parking. While some segments of the market do pursue these developments, there is increasing evidence that the market is shifting. As noted in Chapter One, a large percentage of households is made up of empty-

St. Albans, Vermont



nesters, low-income families, single parents, young people starting out in the work place, and the elderly—people for whom the standard single family home may be more house than is needed. Demographic trends suggest that the percentage of these “non-traditional” households will increase in the coming decades. As major retailers tap out suburban markets, some are turning to downtowns to site new stores. Some employers are looking for new mixed-use development opportunities, or sites located near residential neighborhoods with affordable housing, as ways to attract and retain talented employees. Towns need to be prepared not only to deal with the market pressures that drive sprawl, but also the market demands for more compact, mixed-use development.

This guidebook focuses on regulatory approaches to encouraging smart growth. This chapter, however, addresses important *non*-regulatory approaches that should be pursued in advance of, and in conjunction with, reforming existing regulations to foster sustainable development.

## Develop a Plan to Foster Smart Growth in Your Town

Towns that want to grow smart should begin with a plan, sometimes called a master or comprehensive plan. The plan sets the vision for the town and serves as a guide for the bylaws. In some states a plan is required prior to adopting zoning or subdivision regulations. A number of New England states insist that local plans meet state policies and guidelines (see Figure 6, and Appendix B). Your state’s requirements should be checked before you develop your town’s plan.

Bylaws, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, should be consistent with the plan. Some states require this consistency (see Figure 6 and Appen-

**Figure 6: State Requirements for Comprehensive Plans**

State	Plan must meet state policies/guidelines		State	Regulations must be consistent with plan	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Connecticut		✓	Connecticut	✓	
Maine	✓		Maine	✓	
Massachusetts		✓	Massachusetts		✓
New Hampshire	✓		New Hampshire	✓	
Rhode Island	✓		Rhode Island	✓	
Vermont	✓		Vermont	✓	

dix B). The plan sets forth where and how development should occur. The regulations should set forth development rules that enable the plan to be carried out. Regardless of whether a state requires regulations to comply with the plan, it is good planning practice to do so.

Developing a plan is a complex process that ideally involves broad citizen participation; a determination of the community’s vision of itself in the future; inventories, analysis and mapping of resources; and land use policies to guide future development consistent with the community’s vision. Many

### One Visioning Model: “Future Search”

The Future Search Network, a nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia, conducts a highly structured form of visioning exercise. A “future search” is a planning process designed to enable diverse members of a community to discover and act on common ground quickly. The principles underpinning the future search process are: (1) getting a good cross section of the community in the room – the “whole system,” (2) having everyone explore this system before trying to fix any part, (3) making common ground and future dreams the action agenda, and (4) having group members take responsibility for their own work rather than deferring to facilitators. Future search sessions typically involve 60 to 70 people—a size the Network finds is “large enough to include many perspectives and small enough that the full group can be in dialogue at each step in the process.” Future searches generally take about two and one-half days, and involve the completion of five tasks:

- Establishing a common history
- Developing a map of current trends affecting the group
- Assessing what stakeholders are doing now, what they are proud of, and what they regret
- Devising ideal future scenarios and identifying common themes in those scenarios
- Developing an action plan and identifying people to work together on those actions



**A future search in action.**  
Courtesy of Nevada Division of Public Health

states have manuals to help communities develop plans (see the Resources section for this chapter). Once a plan has been developed, an important component of *implementing* the plan is amending local land use regulations, as featured in chapters 3 through 6.

A plan covers many topics, including land use, transportation, housing, economic development, natural resources, and public facilities and services. The development of a sound plan should include the following steps and considerations.

### **Establish a Public Process to Develop a Vision of the Community's Needs and Wants**

Many communities begin a planning process with a visioning exercise. The idea is to involve the public in a process to determine what people value about their town, what concerns them, and what they want for the town's future. A visioning exercise can lead to a consensus about core principles that can guide the rest of the planning process, as well as other municipal actions. Do people want to preserve open space; create a more pedestrian-friendly downtown; build housing that those with low and moderate incomes can afford? These and dozens of other "quality of life" issues should be discussed in a visioning exercise.

For the visioning exercise to be successful and to have credibility, it should involve broad public participation by residents, municipal employees, volunteers (such as planning or conservation commissioners), businesses, environmental organizations, historic preservation groups, affordable housing advocates, and seasonal homeowners where applicable. While there are many ways to conduct a visioning exercise—see, for example, the inset box for one highly structured method—successful visioning exercises tend to be highly interactive and include visual aids such as slides, graphics, or models.

### **Determine How Much Development is Needed, and How Much is Desired**

An important step in developing a plan is gaining an understanding of how much land is needed for development based on realistic growth projections, and what development is desirable according to the community's vision. To start, obtain 5- to 20-year population and employment projections from your regional planning commission or county or state government. These projections should be used to estimate requirements for housing, commerce, industry, and civic uses.

### **Determine What Areas are Appropriate for Future Development, and What Areas Should be Protected**

After determining how much development is needed and desired, communities should decide what land is appropriate for development, and what land should be protected. For development sites, primary consideration should be given to existing town centers and residential neighborhoods, existing commercial and industrial areas, and new compact growth areas. Only after assessing the opportunities for future development in these locations should new, undeveloped lands be considered. Among these lands, it should be determined where new growth should be encouraged and discouraged. Lands warranting protection from future development can include: farmland, productive woodlands, wetlands, coastal areas and shorelines, wildlife habitat, steep slopes, and unstable or shallow soils. Development constraints as well as areas suitable for infill development should be mapped.

### **Assess the Present and Future Housing Needs of Your Community**

A town's plan should have a well-thought-out housing section. A hous-

ing plan should be designed to meet the needs of diverse populations—such as families, young people, the elderly, disabled people, and low-income residents. Diverse housing types are likely to be needed: apartment buildings, townhouses and attached homes, as well as single-family homes. Careful consideration should be given to the appropriate location of housing. It makes good sense to steer higher density housing development towards the town center, or other areas of concentrated development—near shops and services. Elderly or low-income people who do not drive or who have limited access to a car can take advantage of this proximity, and local businesses will benefit.

### **Transportation is a Critical Element of the Plan**

A plan needs to provide for accessibility between places in the community and other places in the region. Residents and businesses should be given a range of choices in how they travel around the community. Walking, bicycling, transit, rail freight, boats and ferries, and vehicular travel are all options in New England. Towns should link their transportation plans to their land use plans, for example, by having walkable, compact, mixed-use town centers and neighborhoods that minimize vehicular trips, or by preventing land along highway corridors from evolving into strip commercial developments.

## **Public Investment Decisions Should Foster Smart Growth**

One of the most widely accepted approaches to fostering smart growth is to align public investment decisions with town planning policies. Decisions about whether to build and where to locate infrastructure such as municipal buildings, schools, roads, water, and sewer

service facilities can have a profound effect on a town's well-being. While this strategy may appear self-evident, many municipalities have not pursued it. For example, some towns do not relate their water and sewer service areas to a plan and, instead, extend the lines wherever requested by landowners and developers. This lack of planning often results in sprawl. To ensure that public investment decisions are consistent with the goal of promoting smart growth, communities should adopt the following approaches:

### Exhaust Existing Public Infrastructure First

Towns should make the most of existing facilities and services before extending services to new areas, or developing new facilities. For example:

- Before constructing a new municipal building or school, consider whether there are opportunities to make more efficient use of existing municipal and school buildings, perhaps with a renovation or the construction of an addition. If a new municipal building or school is necessary, it should be sited along an existing street, preferably in the town center, and in a location where there already are utility services.
- Before building new streets or extending water and/or sewer service, determine whether areas with existing roads and services can accommodate the town's growth needs. Spreading infrastructure over a large area at low densities can be costly to the community and, inevitably, will promote decentralized sprawl development.

### Take Charge of Public Investment Decisions

Towns are often only too glad to accept a developer's offer to build a new road, park, or utility line, or to dedicate a site for a new school. However, the short-



**Cambridge, Massachusetts.** Transportation planning can lead to more transportation choices.

term benefits of shifting such costs to the developer are often outweighed by the long-term costs and impacts resulting from the developer's project, particularly when new projects are located in areas where the town wants to discourage growth.

Towns are in charge of deciding where to locate town buildings. This public investment choice can support a town center, or it can cause more growth in outlying areas. For example, a school is a focal point for a community. In many small towns it is not just a place of learning but also a community center. If a school is built in an isolated location, it will require car use by employees and parents, and bus transportation for all the children. It may also spur additional development around the school site. If a school is located in a town center, it can be accessed on foot or bicycles by teachers, staff, parents, and children, and can bring vitality (and customers) to the town center.

Towns can direct future growth through numerous public investment policies and, in the process of doing so, set a positive example for private developers and property owners. Such policies can include:

- Establishing a water or sewer service area to limit these utilities to land within the boundaries of the town's growth center.
- Adopting a sewer allocation ordinance to allocate sewer pipe and/or sewage treatment capacity in a way that favors certain uses and development sites consistent with the town's growth objectives.
- Adopting policies precluding the construction of new streets or roads in areas where, pursuant to the town's plan, additional growth is not desired.
- Requiring all public buildings to be located in the town center unless no feasible alternative is available.

(See *Shelburne & Charlotte, Vt.*)

## Adopt Taxes and Fees that Encourage Smart Growth

Some states have tax programs designed to influence growth patterns. In Massachusetts, for example, property owners may qualify for significant property tax discounts for forest, agricultural, or recreational

lands. Lands that qualify are assessed at a small fraction of their fair market value. Certain restrictions apply: significantly, the land must be used for the designated purpose for ten years. If it is not, the property owner is liable for all of the avoided tax payments. Connecticut has a similar program, although the assessment method differs in that assessors are instructed to assess the land at its “current use” value, without regard to neighboring land uses. Connecticut also has a separate program that lets municipalities reduce property taxes for farms by up to 50%. Under Vermont’s program, farm and forest land values are established by a board. Towns are reimbursed by the state up to a maximum amount for an increase in the tax rate caused by the lower land values. Property owners that develop their land during the contract period are subject to a “use change tax.”

Such tax strategies allow farmers and foresters to reduce their costs of doing business, helping to maintain the viability of their operations and the continued use of rural lands for agricultural and forestry purposes. Towns can adopt tax strategies that encourage smart growth in the following ways:

### **Establish Special Assessment Districts to Encourage Desired Development**

Special assessment districts (sometimes referred to as business improvement districts, or “BIDs”) are areas designated by a town to receive additional services in return for an additional assessment on property located within the district. The districts are often used to pay for services that will revitalize a part of the community, such as a downtown or older industrial area, by attracting desired development and community activity. (See *Burlington, Vt.*, p.16.)

### **Establish Tax Increment Finance Districts to Spur Desired Development**

Tax increment financing is a technique whereby towns can finance expenditures through associated anticipated tax revenues. The establishment of a tax increment finance district can enable a town to borrow money for capital improvements—such as streets, utilities, and parks—in areas where development is desired, and use tax revenues generated by new development within the district to cover the associated debt service.

### **Adopt Split-Rate Property Taxes**

Although not yet common in New England, split-rate property taxes can be used to foster smart growth in accordance with a town’s plan. Split-rate property tax systems, which are utilized in some cities in Pennsylvania, can be used to tax land more heavily than buildings, thereby discouraging property owners from allowing downtown land to sit unused (or using such land for parking lots), and instead encouraging the construction of buildings. In areas where development is not desired—such as actively used farmland and

#### **FOR EXAMPLE**

**Shelburne, Vermont** recently passed an ordinance governing allocation of sewer capacity in its expanded wastewater treatment plants. (CLF, working with a group of local citizens, was actively involved in the process.) The ordinance establishes a sewer area boundary, reducing development pressure on lands outside the boundary, and creates a capacity estimate “set-aside,” so that over the 20-year life span of the plants there will be sufficient capacity for anticipated projects (such as school needs) in the service area.

**Charlotte, Vermont** is making sure that its public investments fit with its town plan, which designates the village of West Charlotte as the town center. The town offices, the public library, and a small museum were constructed on a new road that circles a town green in the village. The US Postal Service, which had been contemplating a site on a farm field a few miles away, located its expanded post office at the intersection of the new road and the main highway within the village.



**Winchester, Massachusetts chose to renovate this 100-year-old elementary school in the town center rather than build a new school outside the center.**

forestland—land can be taxed at a lower rate than buildings, thereby discouraging building construction. This practice benefits farm and forest landowners, while discouraging development on valuable resource lands.

### Impose Impact Fees

Impact fees are charges placed on new development to cover additional costs to the community for accommodating a project. They often cover capital costs for roads, schools, and recreation land. Impact fees are discussed further in Appendices A and B. Variable impact fees, also referred to as space-based impact fees, are fees based on the location of a development within a community. (See Lancaster, Calif.)

## Promote Smart Growth Through Transportation

**A**cross the country, the average annual mileage for vehicles is growing at a faster pace than

### FOR EXAMPLE

**Burlington, Vermont** has developed a special assessment district for the Church Street Marketplace—a downtown pedestrian mall. Property owners within the Church Street district are assessed an annual charge based on their ground-floor square footage. In return for these charges, the property owners and tenants receive year-round maintenance, management of licenses and permits for street vendors and entertainment, and advertising and promotions.

**Lancaster, California** has fostered smart growth by assessing a surcharge on impact fees for each mile a project is located from the town center.

population. As people and businesses spread further and further into the countryside, more car trips are required, and the length of those trips increases. The chapters that follow explain the ways in which land use regulations can lead to development patterns which encourage fewer, and shorter, car trips. To supplement these regulatory actions, communities should also look at what they are doing to provide for other transportation options.

Towns should strive to offer residents and people who work in them a choice in the mode of transportation they use. Larger towns may have access to bus or rail service. *All* communities can have systems of pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets and roads, as well as bike paths, which encourage people to rely less on their cars. Towns can provide alternative modes of transportation by:

- Joining regional transit authorities
- Planning convenient and sheltered bus stops in new compact growth centers
- Building pedestrian-friendly sidewalks to allow people to conveniently get around communities on foot
- Instituting pedestrian-friendly street standards such as small curb radii, pedestrian crossing improvements, on-street parking that buffers pedestrians from traffic, and planted edge strips
- Re-striping and/or designing streets and roads to better accommodate cyclists
- Providing bicycle storage facilities on buses and trains, at bus and train stations, and at commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings within the community

## Adopt Smart Building Codes

**S**ome states are revising their building codes to distinguish between existing and new buildings, so as not to discourage the reno-

vation of existing buildings. Often these codes can inhibit the redevelopment of existing buildings for new or expanded uses. For example, code requirements for the width of corridors often are applied to all buildings, even though existing buildings may have narrower corridors that cannot feasibly be widened. Also, many property owners find that even the smallest improvement to upper floors in downtowns and village centers can trigger complete compliance of the entire space with building codes and accessibility requirements. This discourages owners from making renovations that would encourage the reuse of second and third stories. New Jersey and Maryland have adopted separate building codes for existing buildings that strike a better balance between the goals of rehabilitated existing buildings and achieving safer buildings. In Rhode Island, a similar code has been proposed, and Vermont has special provisions for existing buildings. Citizen planners can examine their state and municipal codes and talk to area developers, contractors, architects, and interest groups to find out whether or not the codes are inhibiting the redevelopment of existing buildings. A coordinated approach should be taken to code development, involving public officials, builders, accessibility advocates, and historic preservation advocates.

## Encourage Infill Development in Your Town Center

**A** key to fighting sprawl on the outskirts of town is to make downtowns and village centers more attractive for development. However, many developers find that the costs of building in downtowns are prohibitive. As real estate expert Donovan Rypkema has said, "Nobody builds at the edge instead of downtown because they hate downtown. They build on the edge because it is anticipated that their

total value will be greater than their total cost.” Rural and suburban locations are typically less costly to develop for the following reasons:

- Rural and suburban land tends to cost less than land located in town centers.
- Developers of rural and suburban land are less likely to encounter title problems.
- Permitting is often less complex and less time-consuming for land on the outskirts of town.
- Rural and suburban land may be subject to fewer zoning restrictions than downtown properties.
- Site preparation and construction on rural and suburban land tend to be simpler and less costly.
- Suburban buildings can usually meet the needs of national merchandisers and have room for expansion.
- Rural and suburban land has ample space for parking.

Chapter 3 contains a detailed discussion of regulatory strategies for encouraging downtown and village development. Other, non-regulatory actions that communities may consider include:

- Working with nonprofit organizations, such as community development corporations or community land trusts, to rehabilitate downtown buildings for housing and commercial development. These owners can insure that upper-floor housing will remain affordable as the downtown improves.
- Becoming a National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street community (see inset box).
- Organizing a community group to bring a needed retail store, such as a grocery or laundromat, into the town center.
- Determining whether local permitting processes can be amended to advance downtown projects more quickly, and to provide more predictability for applicants.



Courtesy of Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund

**Dorchester, Massachusetts. The Erie-Ellington Project, consisting of 50 units on seven scattered lots on four streets, combines affordable housing with energy efficient “green” building techniques and architecture that is consistent with the existing neighborhood.**

- As discussed above, examining the building codes to determine what provisions are creating obstacles for property owners redeveloping their spaces.

## Adopt Open Space Protection Strategies

Many towns recognize that identifying and preserving open space is critical to enhancing the quality of life for residents. Open space provides resources for the production of food and forest products, protects water and air quality, and provides wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. In addition to the numerous regulatory strategies discussed in chapters 4 and 6, towns should consider the following non-regulatory approaches to protecting these important resources:

### Develop an Open Space Plan

An open space plan, which must be part of or integrated with a master plan, sets forth a town’s vision for preserving/creating an open space system that meets

the specific needs of a town. For example, open space plans can be designed to identify and protect green space in urban places, critical natural resources, scenic areas, and existing or potential park lands, playgrounds, trails, and perhaps community farms and forests (see box on p.23). They can also be used to establish greenbelts that define the edge of settled areas, and to protect blocks of open land in the rural countryside. These plans should include inventories of current open space resources, analyses of their condition, and projections of the community’s future open space needs. They should include maps documenting the locations of existing and proposed open space, as well as strategies for protecting and maintaining those resources.

### Explore Funding Opportunities for Preserving Open Spaces

Each of the six New England states has a program for the purchase of land and conservation easements. Through these programs, funds can be obtained for outright land acquisition, or for the purchase of easements that remove the

development rights from the land. Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont have programs that focus on protecting farmland. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board also provides funds to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, for protection of farm and forest lands, important natural areas, and certain types of recreation land.

Some communities have established local funds for the acquisition of land and/or conservation easements. Branford, Connecticut uses its fund for farmland protection. East Montpelier, Vermont established a fund for farmland protection that provides a local match to Vermont Housing and Conservation Board grants.

### Work with Local Conservation Organizations

Local, regional, or statewide land trusts are active in the six New England states. These nonprofit conservation organizations can help implement open space plans by encouraging property owners

to donate parcels of land or conservation easements on land, and by accepting responsibility for the stewardship of the easements. Conservation organizations also can work with developers to encourage cluster or conservation subdivisions which, unlike traditional subdivisions, set aside large portions of land for permanent protection. (See appendix A for a discussion of cluster zoning.)

The Rural Land Foundation in Lincoln, Massachusetts pioneered the use of "limited developments" in the 1960s. Over the years, the Foundation has acquired large parcels of undeveloped land, sold pieces for development purposes to recoup its investment, and kept the remainder in permanent conservation.

### Work with Neighboring Towns for Smart Growth

Towns can work cooperatively with their neighbors to achieve common goals. Such regional efforts can be effective strategies for pro-

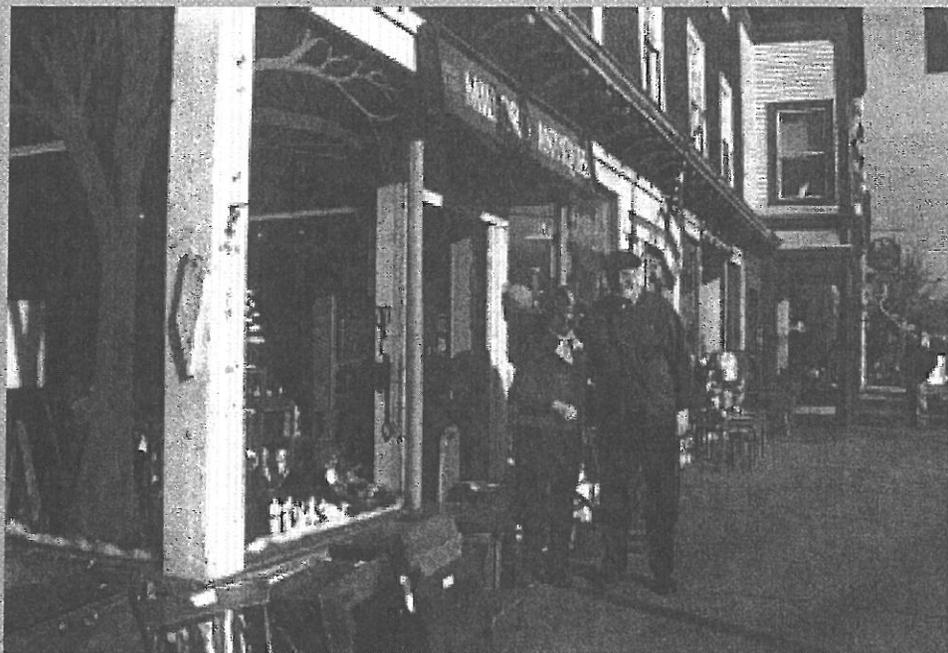
tecting common resource lands and greenways; coordinating public utilities and transportation, including interconnected bike paths and walking trails; tax-base sharing; and planning for housing, commerce, and industry.

Regional or county planning commissions provide much of the planning coordination among municipalities in the New England states. While the authority and resources of the commissions vary by state, look to these commissions for planning related information and for technical assistance.

Intermunicipal agreements are one way to solidify regional coordination. For example, the ski resort communities of Fayston, Waitsfield, and Warren, Vermont have established an intermunicipal planning district. Through contributions from each community, a planning staff was established to assist the towns with both local and regional planning issues. Intermunicipal agreements also can be used to establish park or conservation districts to protect watersheds or water bodies that cross town lines.

## National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Center

Since 1980, the National Main Street Center has been working with communities to revitalize their historic or traditional commercial areas. The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of downtowns by improving management, strengthening public participation, and making downtowns fun places to be. Most of the New England states have programs that coordinate with the National Main Street Center.



Courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Milford, New Hampshire. Nashua Street is a historic district supported by the National Trust's "Main Streets" program.

State law may establish regional planning organizations that also regulate developments of regional impact. Issues of unplanned growth and concern for Cape Cod's unique natural and cultural resources led in 1990 to the establishment of the Cape Cod Commission. The commission is a regulatory, technical assistance, and regional planning agency.

Some states promote intermunicipal cooperation by requiring new developments to conform to regional plans under state environmental and land use control laws. Under Act 250, Vermont's Land Use and Development Law, all permit applicants must conform to a local or regional plan, among other requirements. Developments of regional impact must be consistent with regional plans.



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## Make Use of State Programs

Many New England states have special policies and programs that provide incentives or opportunities for smart growth within communities. Such policies and programs include the following:

### Massachusetts' Brownfields Program

The Massachusetts brownfields program includes a state insurance program that provides environmental and secured lender insurance; state funding and financing for site assessment and cleanup; tax credits for cleanup costs; and a covenant not-to-sue program that affords liability protection from state actions regarding prior contamination, for parties interested in redeveloping contaminated sites.

### Vermont's Downtown Program

A state board will designate a "downtown development district" after a town takes several steps supportive of downtown development. With the designation come several incentives for down-

## Working the Commons

What is open space for? The answer to this deceptively simple question is the central point of Brian Donahue's remarkable book *Reclaiming the Commons: Community Farms and Forests in a New England Town*. Twenty years ago, Donahue founded Land's Sake, a community farm in Weston, Massachusetts. Since then, Donahue and friends (among them many Weston children) have run a successful and beloved community farming operation where they have grown organic produce, made apple cider and maple syrup, harvested firewood and timber from the town forest, and kept horses and sheep. In *Reclaiming the Commons*, Donahue argues that while it is good to have open space for wildlife and passive recreation, we are missing a huge opportunity if all we do is strive to preserve land, without having some land in every community that is worked on and cared for. Donahue offers four reasons why every community should have a community farming operation. Those reasons are:

- **Ecological:** Good ecosystem management can provide an environmentally sound landscape, and in growing our own crops and harvesting our own wood we are taking some responsibility for providing for ourselves sustainably.
- **Economic:** Protecting land can be expensive. Tending to land, through sustainable farming and forestry, can pay for itself.
- **Educational:** Community farming provides a truly powerful educational opportunity for children and teenagers. *Reclaiming the Commons* has a number of powerful examples of this phenomenon.
- **Aesthetic:** Community farms can be beautiful places.

Indeed, Donahue persuasively argues that community farming makes the case for land conservation like nothing else, and that it is one of the keys to making life in American suburbs more economically and environmentally sustainable, as well as more meaningful.

town projects, such as tax credits for rehabilitation of older or historic buildings, planning grants for site assessments of contaminated sites, funding from the state infrastructure bank and downtown transportation fund, and rebates for the cost of sprinkler systems.

### Massachusetts' Executive Order 418

This executive order is designed to encourage towns to plan and to create affordable housing. It provides state grants for up to \$30,000 for municipalities to prepare plans that address affordable housing, open space, economic development, and transportation. It also gives priority distribution for state discretionary grants to municipalities that "are taking steps to increase the supply of housing for individuals and families across a broad range of incomes."

### Maine's Site Location of Development Act

Major developments are required to meet state standards for traffic, impact on the natural environment, storm-water management and erosion control, groundwater, adequate infrastructure, and flooding. Developments within designated growth areas are exempt from certain criteria.

### Connecticut's Environmental Impact Statement Requirement

Under Connecticut law, state agencies are required to prepare environmental

impact statements for agency activities that have the potential to affect the environment. Towns may comment on these impact statements. This process gives towns a voice in state agency actions that would have significant land use impacts. Massachusetts has a similar, broader program that towns can participate in, under its Environmental Policy Act.

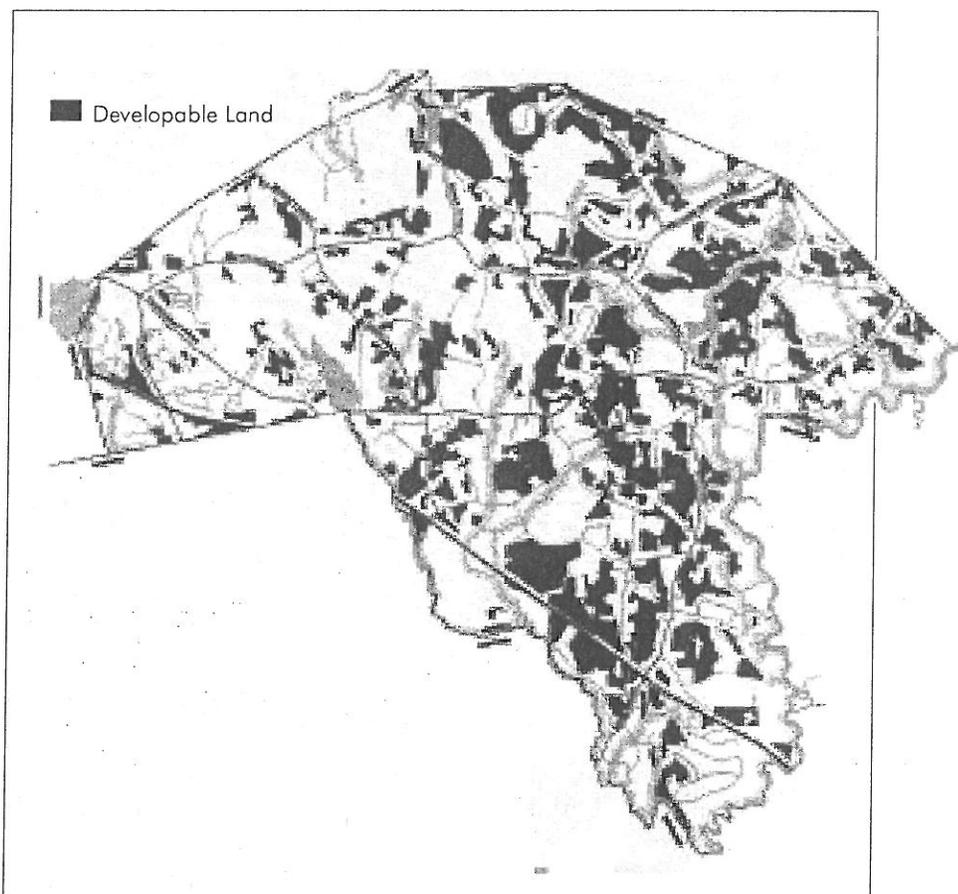
## Conduct a Build-Out Analysis

To understand the ability of a town's existing land use regulations to foster and achieve smart growth, a community can conduct a build-out analysis. Such an analysis demonstrates visually – in map, model, or computer graphic form – what the community could look like in the future if current land development trends

and regulations continue. The build-out is an effective way to engage town officials and the public in thinking about the future of their town, and the changes that may need to be made to its plan, regulations, and permitting practices to achieve a growth pattern that is consistent with the town's vision for its future.

Build-out analyses can range from simple to sophisticated. It generally makes sense to begin by determining what portions of land have the potential to be developed. Typically, information in the form of aerial photography and GIS maps (showing, for example, topography, wetlands, etc.) either already exists, or can be assembled fairly easily. Once obtained, this information can be used to make reasonable assumptions about how much developable land exists in town, and the amount of development which could be constructed

Build-out map of Norwell, Massachusetts



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston, Massachusetts

#### FOR EXAMPLE

*Massachusetts is funding build-out analyses for all of the state's 351 cities and towns, to be provided by, or in collaboration with, the state's regional planning authorities. Other states that offer planning grants may be willing to pay for such work as well.*

under existing zoning regulations. A build-out analysis can go on to estimate future traffic conditions, or the fiscal impacts of development on the town. The assumptions underlying any build-out analysis should be clearly stated, and the visual images portraying the build-

out should be easily understood by the public.

In this chapter, we have provided an overview of the wide variety of strategies that can be implemented to achieve smart growth in your community. In the next four chapters we focus

on how smart growth can be fostered through local land use laws, principally zoning and subdivision regulations, and through the implementation of these laws.

## Norwell Build-Out Summary Information

Community Preservation Initiative – Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

### Current Demographics and Build-Out Projections

Population		
1990		9,279
1998		9,716
Build-Out		16,637
Students		
1990		1,692
1998		1,849
Build-Out		3,221
Households		
1990		3,004
1998		3,227
Build-Out		5,622
Water Use (gallons/day)		
1998		955,000
Build-Out		1,522,062

### Summary of Buildout Impacts

	Totals
Additional Developable Land Area (sq ft)	130,237,036
Additional Developable Area (acres)	2,990
Additional Residential Units	2,395
Additional Commercial/Industrial Buildable Floor Area (sq ft)	639,847
Additional School Children	1,372
Additional Water Demand (gallons/day)	567,062
<i>Additional Residential Water Demand</i>	519,073
<i>Additional Commercial and Industrial Water Demand</i>	47,989
Additional Municipal Solid Waste (tons/yr)	3,550
<i>Additional Non-Recyclable Solid Waste (tons)</i>	2,525
<i>Additional Recyclable Solid Waste (tons)</i>	1,025
Additional Roadways (miles)	41

**Notes:**

1. "Residential Water Use" is based on 75 gallons per person per day.
2. "Comm./Ind. Water Use" is based on 75 gallons per 1,000 square feet of floor space.
3. "Municipal Solid Waste" is based on 1026 lbs. per person per year. All waste estimates are for residential use only.
4. The number of "Students" at buildout is based on a student per household ratio taken from external demographic estimates.
5. "New Roads" are based on an assumption that 60% of the new residential lots will have required frontage on new roads.





