

# INTRODUCTION

New Hampshire state law mandates planning boards to “*prepare and amend from time to time a master plan to guide the development of the municipality.*”<sup>1</sup> The sole purpose of the master plan is to aid the planning board in the performance of its duties. The duties of the planning board are varied, but the only duty specifically required<sup>2</sup> is the maintenance of the town’s master plan.

The statute goes on to say that the master plan may include consideration of any areas outside of the town which, in the judgement of the planning board, bear a relation to or have an impact on the planning of the town.

## I. WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

The master plan may be comprised of a collection of reports, statements, land use and development proposals, with accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and other descriptive matter that shows as fully as is possible and practical the planning board’s recommendations for the desirable development of the town. The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections<sup>3</sup> :

- (a) “A vision section that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.”
- (a) “A land use section upon which all other sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use.”

The master plan may also include the following sections (RSA 674:2.III):

- (a) Transportation Section;
- (b) Community facilities section;
- (c) Economic development section;
- (d) Natural resources section;
- (e) Natural hazards section;
- (f) Recreation section;
- (g) Utility and public service section;
- (h) Cultural and historic resources section;
- (i) Regional concern section;
- (j) Neighborhood plan section;
- (k) Community design section;
- (l) Housing section;

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<sup>1</sup>RSA 674:1.

<sup>2</sup>Other planning board duties, such as subdivision and site plan review, etc., are actually allowed only if the voters at town meeting authorize the planning board to take on these responsibilities.

<sup>3</sup>RSA 674:2.

(m) Implementation section.

Where appropriate, the Plan may contain appendices or separate reports that contain the underlying scientific and statistical data that support the various elements of the Plan.

## **II. WHAT WILL THE MASTER PLAN ACCOMPLISH?**

The Master Plan provides a framework for the Planning Board in particular and the town as a whole to use in shaping the future over a period of years (5-10 years is recommended for master plan updates<sup>4</sup>). The Planning Board should be able to refer to the town's Master Plan whenever a development proposal comes before it, to determine whether development that is being proposed is consistent with the Master Plan.

Most importantly, in order for any municipality in the State of New Hampshire to adopt a zoning ordinance, a Planning Board must have adopted, at a minimum, a general statement of goals and objectives and the land use section of a master plan. In Greenfield's case the Town does have a zoning ordinance. And, the current Master Plan was completed in 1985; in the ensuing 17 years, many changes have occurred in town. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Planning Board to bring the Master Plan up to date with current conditions.

This Master Plan represents - to the best ability of the Planning Board to determine - the wishes of the residents of Greenfield regarding the present and future vision of the town for the next 5-10 years. Throughout this process, the Planning Board has informed the public and solicited comment in order to reach the concluding recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup>RSA 674:3.II.