

TITLE LXIV PLANNING AND ZONING

CHAPTER 674 LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING AND REGULATORY POWERS

Master Plan

Section 674:2

674:2 Master Plan; Purpose and Description. –

- I. The purpose of the master plan is to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection.
- II. The master plan shall be a set of statements and land use and development principles for the municipality with such accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions as to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances and other measures of the planning board. Each section of the master plan shall be consistent with the others in its implementation of the vision section. The master plan shall be a public record subject to the provisions of RSA 91-A. The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections:
 - (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.
 - (b) A land use section upon which all the following 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.
- III. The master plan may also include the following sections:
 - (a) A transportation section which considers all pertinent modes of transportation and provides a framework for both adequate local needs and for coordination with regional and state transportation plans. Suggested items to be considered may include but are not limited to public transportation, park and ride facilities, and bicycle routes, or paths, or both.
 - (b) A community facilities section which identifies facilities to support the future land use pattern of subparagraph II(b), meets the projected needs of the community, and coordinates with other local governments' special districts and school districts, as well as with state and federal agencies that have multi-jurisdictional impacts.
 - (c) An economic development section which proposes actions to suit the community's economic goals, given its economic strengths and weaknesses in the region.
 - (d) A natural resources section which identifies and inventories any critical or sensitive areas or resources, not only those in the local community, but also those shared with abutting communities. This section, which may specifically include a water resources management and protection plan, shall provide a factual basis for any land development regulations that may be enacted to protect water resources and other identified natural areas. A key component in preparing this section is to identify any conflicts between other elements of the master plan and natural resources, as well as conflicts with plans of abutting communities. Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to permit municipalities to regulate surface or groundwater withdrawals that they are explicitly prohibited from regulating.
 - (e) A natural hazards section which documents the physical characteristics, severity, frequency, and extent of any

potential natural hazards to the community. It should identify those elements of the built environment at risk from natural hazards as well as extent of current and future vulnerability that may result from current zoning and development policies.

(f) A recreation section which shows existing recreation areas and addresses future recreation needs.

(g) A utility and public service section analyzing the need for and showing the present and future general location of existing and anticipated public and private utilities, both local and regional, including telecommunications utilities, their supplies, and facilities for distribution and storage.

(h) A section which identifies cultural, archeological, and historic resources and protects them for rehabilitation or preservation from the impact of other land use tools such as land use regulations, housing, or transportation. Such section may encourage the preservation or restoration of stone walls, provided agricultural practices, as defined in RSA 21:34-a, are not impeded.

(i) A regional concern section, which describes the specific areas in the municipality of significant regional interest. These areas may include resources wholly contained within the municipality or bordering, or shared, or both, with neighboring municipalities. Items to be considered may include but are not limited to public facilities, natural resources, economic and housing potential, transportation, agriculture, and open space. The intent of this section is to promote regional awareness in managing growth while fulfilling the vision statements.

(j) A neighborhood plan section which focuses on a specific geographical area of local government that includes substantial residential development. This section is a part of the local master plan and shall be consistent with it. No neighborhood plan shall be adopted until a local master plan is adopted.

(k) A community design section to identify positive physical attributes in a municipality and provide for design goals and policies for planning in specific areas to guide private and public development.

(l) A housing section which assesses local housing conditions and projects future housing needs of residents of all levels of income and ages in the municipality and the region as identified in the regional housing needs assessment performed by the regional planning commission pursuant to RSA 36:47, II, and which integrates the availability of human services with other planning undertaken by the community.

(m) An implementation section, which is a long range action program of specific actions, time frames, allocation of responsibility for actions, description of land development regulations to be adopted, and procedures which the municipality may use to monitor and measure the effectiveness of each section of the plan.

(n) An energy section, which includes an analysis of energy and fuel resources, needs, scarcities, costs, and problems affecting the municipality and a statement of policy on the conservation of energy.

(o) A coastal management section which may address planning needs resulting from projected coastal property or habitat loss due to increased frequency of storm surge, flooding, and inundation.

(p) A waste reduction section outlining a municipality's solid waste reduction plan, including ways to reduce solid waste disposal, such as increasing reuse, recycling, composting, and/or hazardous and electronic waste management. Such efforts may include education and outreach, a needs analysis, grant funding, community polling, a town waste committee, and regional cooperation.

Source. 1983, 447:1. 1986, 167:2. 1988, 270:1. 1989, 339:28; 363:15. 2002, 178:2. 2007, 40:1. 2008, 269:1. 2011, 224:118. 2013, 76:1, eff. Jan. 1, 2014; 189:1, eff. Aug. 31, 2013; 202:1, eff. Sept. 7, 2013. 2024, 266:1, eff. Sept. 24, 2024.