



Narration: Welcome to North Country Council’s presentation on Master Planning Services meant to provide an overview of what a Master Plan is and how the Council can work to support the process in your community.

Presenters



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Narration: We appreciate you joining us for this brief presentation reviewing Master Plans and how the Council can support you! Council Staff Courtney Bowler and Cathlin Lord have worked to put together this resource to be used by communities in the North Country region who are considering adopting a Master Plan, updating their existing one or wanting to better understand what a Master Plan is.

What we'll cover

What is a Master Plan

When is a Master Plan needed

Local Benefit to having a Master Plan

What goes into a Master Plan

Who contributes to a Master Plan

How to put your Master Plan to work

How the Council can support your Master Plan process



Narration: During this presentation we'll introduce and define what a Master Plan is, when its needed, local benefits to having one as well as what goes into a Master Plan, who contributes to the process, and how to put your Master Plan to work. Lastly, we'll explain how the Council can provide your community support and technical assistance during the Master Planning process.

What is a Master Plan?

- ▶ A Master Plan is an aspirational planning document which envisions the future character, growth and development of a community and proposes a path leading to positive community outcomes that align with the community's values and goals.

Purpose as defined by RSA 674:2, I

- ▶ ...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 & enhancing the unique quality of life & culture of NH, 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.

Description as defined by RSA 674:2, II

- ▶ ...shall be a set of statements & land use & development principles for the municipality with such accompanying maps, diagrams, charts, & descriptions as to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances & other measures of the planning board.



Narration: The Master plan falls under RSA 674:2. Part 1 is about the purpose of the Master Plan and part 2 describes what goes into a plan as well as the required sections of the plan.

Defining a Master Plan

Its Purpose

It is a planning document that paves a path for future development in a place

It describes When, Why, Where, & How for community progression



Narration: To put it simply, a master plan is a planning document that serves as a guide to the overall character, physical form, growth, & development of a community. It describes how, why, where, & when to build or rebuild in a community. It's a guide for the future as reference for decision makers and includes a summary of actions which can be implemented to meet the vision's goals. A master plan is a source of information based on the existing qualities of the community with an eye for the future.

Defining a Master Plan

It
Includes

Community &
Stakeholder input

Community Details &
Data



Narration: A Master Plan tells a story. It does that by creating a sense of place & understanding by presenting maps, community data and voices, as well as their analysis which help form the values and principles on which the plan's identified goals are based upon.

Defining a Master Plan

Put it to
Work

Identify tools &
strategies

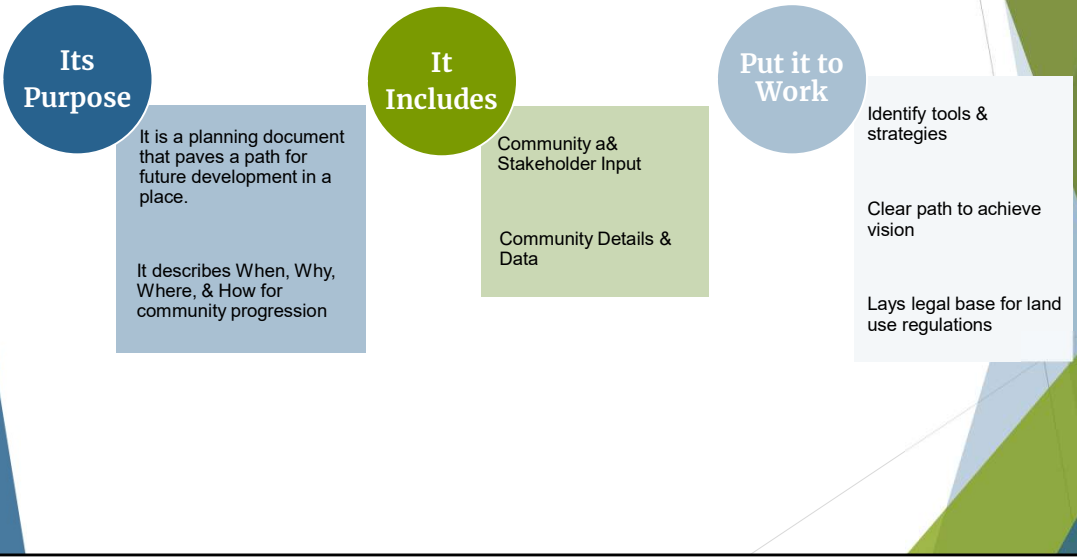
Clear path to achieve
vision

Lays legal base for land
use regulations



Narration: A master plan as a working document that charts a path to achieve its stated vision. It includes tools and strategies to accomplish the goals. It also forms the legal base for land use regulations adopted in the community.

Defining a Master Plan



Narration: This is the general overview of what a Master Plan is. We will connect these components to what other details are included in a Master Plan making it a dynamic reference source for community leaders.

Defining a Master Plan

What it is

- ▶ Guide to the future
- ▶ Reference document
- ▶ Summary of local actions
- ▶ Source of information
- ▶ Guide to decision making
- ▶ Statement of public policy

What it is NOT

- ▶ Legally enforceable
- ▶ Binding upon municipal officials when making specific land use decisions
- ▶ Land use regulations
- ▶ Ordinance of law



Narration: Just as important as it is to know what a Master Plan is, it's also important to know what a Master Plan is not. It is a guide and reference document for municipal decision makers, but it is not enforceable. Municipal officials are not bound to the aspirations described in a Master Plan when making specific land use decisions. The Master Plan itself is not land use regulations or an ordinance of law but can lay the legal foundation for any subsequent adopted ordinances.



When is a Master Plan required vs. helpful?

(State Requirements & Local Goals)

NOT all
communities are
required to have a
Master Plan

BUT

They are required in
certain situations

Master Plans must be adopted for a
community to implement planning
tools like:

Adopting a:

- zoning ordinance
- historic district
- growth management ordinance

Establishing:

- a capital improvement program
- innovative land use controls



Narration: Not all communities are REQUIRED to have a Master Plan, but they are required in certain situations. There are certain planning “tools” for which a Master Plan must be adopted by a community for them to be considered as planning options. Examples of those planning options that REQUIRE the adoption of a Master Plan are the adoption of a zoning ordinance, a historic district, or a growth management ordinance; as well as the establishment of capital improvement programs & use of innovative land use controls like phased development, impact fees, cluster developments, and more.

Communities are

**NOT
required**

to have a Master
Plan for the
Planning Board to
make use of certain
powers

Planning Board's powers to review

- Subdivisions, and
- Site Plans

Does not require a Current Master Plan

However, they should help a community
reach the vision of its Master Plan



Narration: It's important to understand that communities are NOT required to have a Master Plan for the Planning Board to make use of certain powers. The absence of a master plan does not impact the planning board's powers to review subdivisions or site plans. However, they are SUPPORTED by & should flow from the Master Plan.

Local benefits of a Master Plan



Can provide guidance to local officials when making decisions



Can guide budgets & capital improvement plans



Can set the stage for land use ordinances (if desired)



Can increase access to grant funds



Can jump start community engagement & action around a shared vision & goals

What to Include in a Master Plan



Narration: The Vision statement is the overarching aspiration which drives the rest of the Master Plan's sections and their goals, policies, and suggested actions. The Vision puts into words the desires of the community for its future within the context of not just the local community, but also the region & sometimes the state.

From the Vision, the community's goals are derived. Goals are those wide-ranging, future-looking benchmarks to reach as expressed within the Vision Statement.

Principles come from the Vision & stated Goals help decision-makers tackle things unanticipated in the plan.

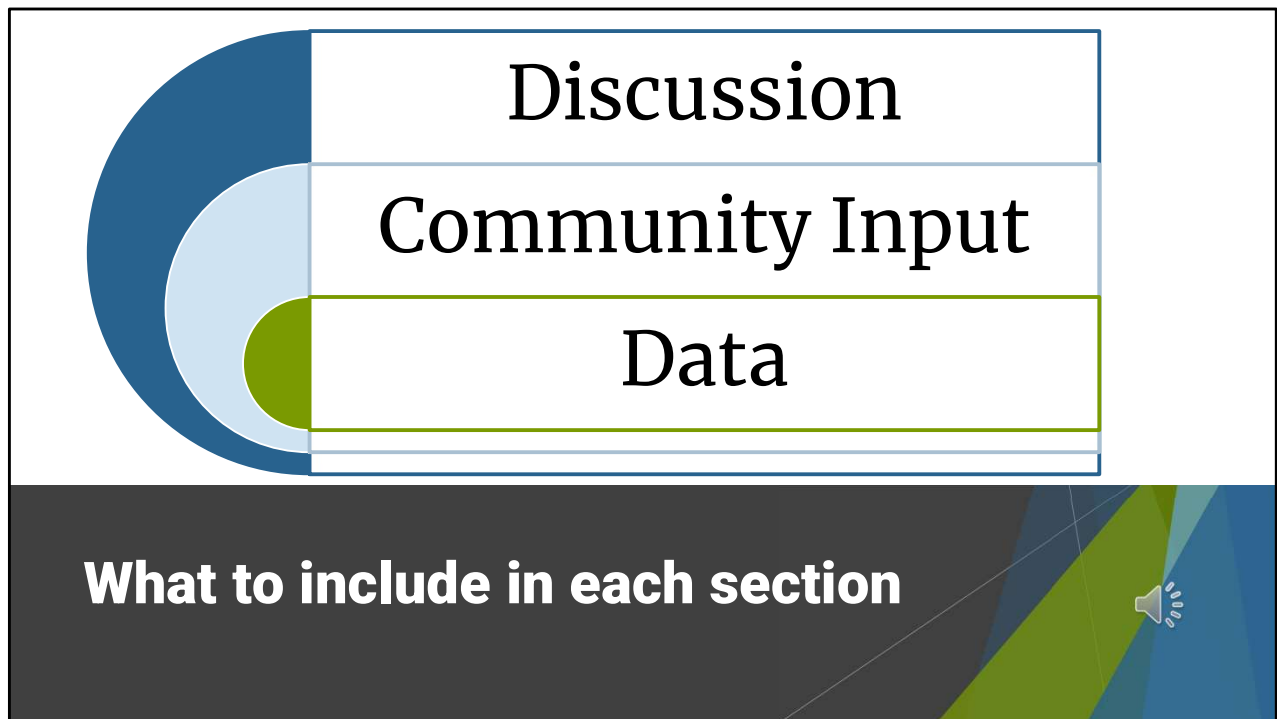
Action items are based on the existing capacities, or the future goals of the town with the aim of providing support to fulfill or reach those goals.



Narration: There are two REQUIRED sections of a Master Plan per state statute Chapter 674, section 2. Those are the Vision & Land Use sections. When getting into the process of building a Master Plan, lots of information will be gathered from all sources. Information, after all is the key to successful planning. Most of the information that will be included in a Plan will be based on the background studies that are prepared for the process, & ultimately will be presented in chapter format.

Other optional sections include topics like Economic Development, Housing, Natural Resources, Transportation, Community Facilities, Recreation, Utilities & Services, Natural Hazards, Regional Concerns, Neighborhood Planning & Design, Cultural, Archeological & Historic Assets, & Energy.

Additional chapters can be tailored specific to the unique characteristics of your community, making the Master Plan truly one of a kind.



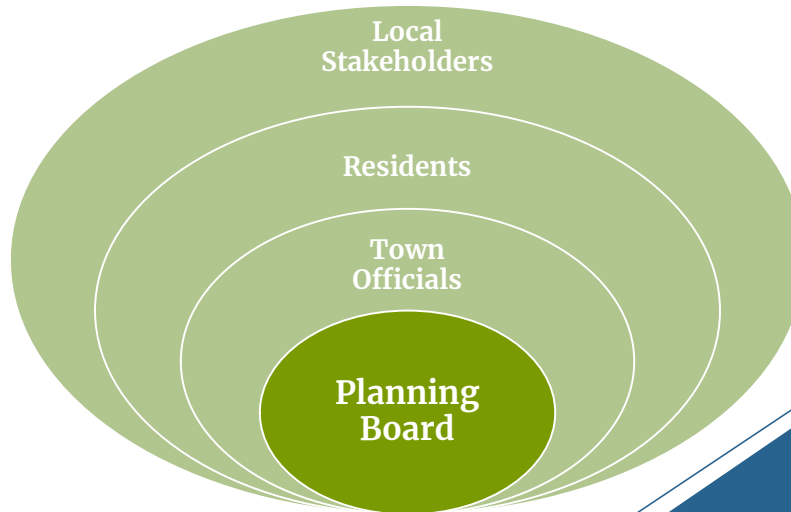
Narration: Each section of the master plan should include data, Community Input and Discussion which support the vision and the actions to achieve its stated goals.

Data are the statistics and available information about what and who is in the town.

Community Input is the summary of what was heard through the interviews and outreach during the master planning process.

Discussion is the evaluation of both data and community input and what that might lead to in goals, principles, and actions.

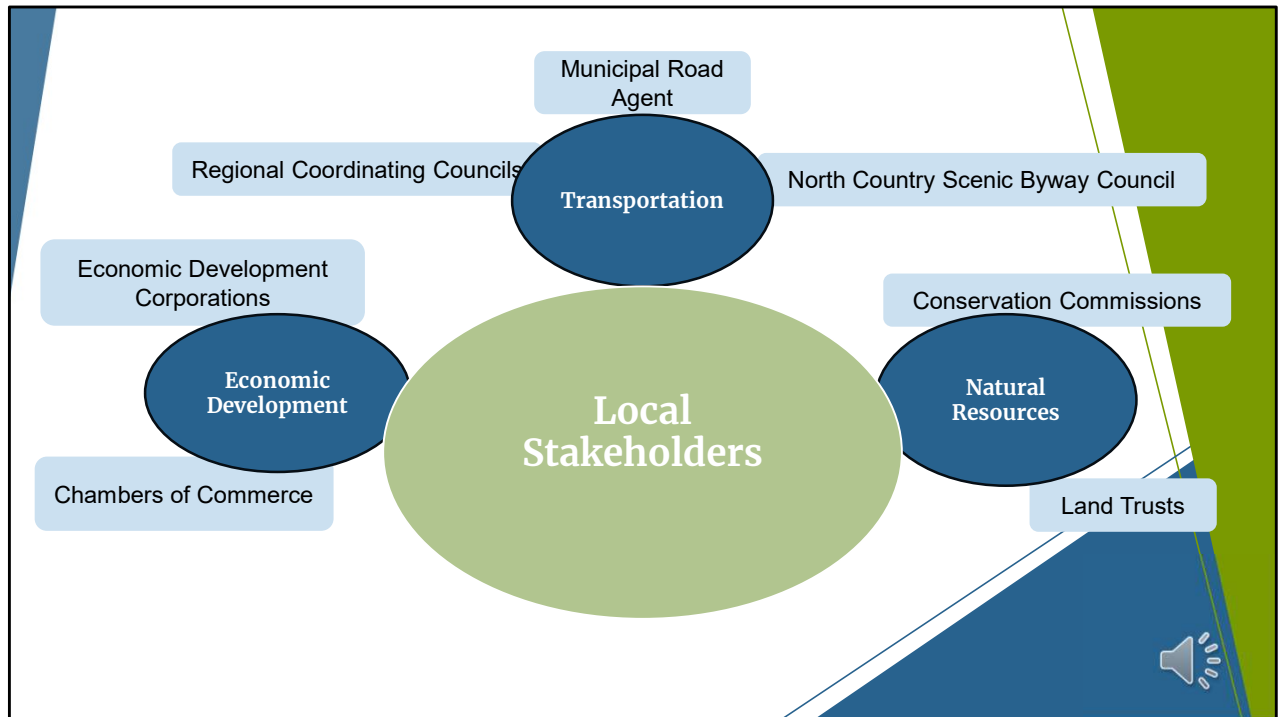
Who contributes to a Master Plan?



Narration: The Master Plan primarily falls under the authority of a Municipality's Planning Board. It has a duty and responsibility, as required by state law, to prepare and/or update the community's master plan. The planning board is responsible to determine when it's timely to prepare, amend, or update a master plan and the importance to maintaining a viable plan.

Town officials and the governing body should be included in the preparation of a master plan or its amendments and update to keep lines of communication open. This can help the plan be used as a tool by decision makers and relevant as development occurs in the community.

Residents contribute to the master plan during public outreach opportunities and public hearings to provide feedback as the plan's goals and vision take shape.

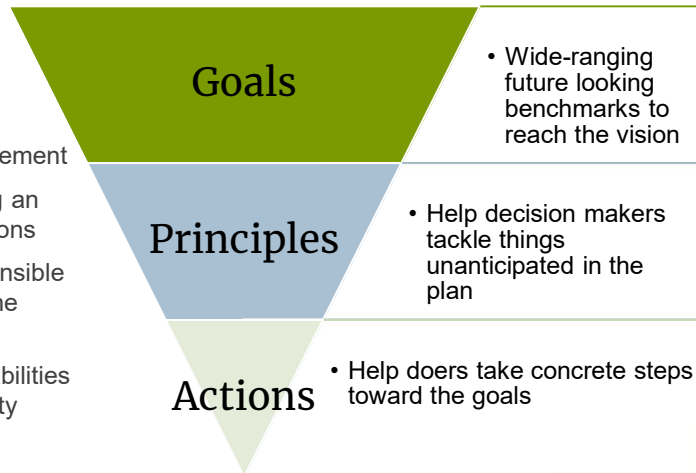


Narration: Other local stakeholders and community members at large can contribute to specific sections of the plan such as economic development, transportation, or natural resources. Frequently, interest groups like Economic Development Corporations, Scenic Byways Councils, or Conservation commissions & land trusts have intimate knowledge of the activity in the community and are willing to share those insights. They could have their own adopted plans which may be used to help inform the municipality’s master plan.

This by no means is an exhaustive list, but examples of who and what can contribute to a Master Plan. A well-designed master plan considers the very local perspective as well as regional assets which impact the community.

Putting the Master Plan to Work

- ▶ Goals are included in the Vision Statement
- ▶ Principles are statements expressing an agreed upon position to guide decisions
- ▶ Action items or strategies help responsible parties take concrete steps toward the plan's goals
- ▶ All should be based on realistic capabilities and the future vision of the community



Narration: While a master plan is not an enforceable document, it can serve as a policy guide for a municipality to develop any land use controls or ordinances based upon the collective determined vision of the community for the future. An implementation section is not required by statute but is a fundamental part of any plan transforming it from an aspiration into a tool that supports the municipality's process to achieve its stated goals.

The implementation plan identifies how, when, and by whom the recommendations of the plan are to be initiated, how to go about completing said action, & determining when its considered complete. This section contains the long & short-range strategy consisting of specific actions, time frames, allocating responsibilities to specific party, and prioritizing actions for completion. The strategy may be used by the municipality to monitor and measure the effectiveness of each section of the plan as the plan is applied with each phase of development.

Charting a Path Forward

The vision found in a Master Plan can be implemented through things like:

- ▶ development of budget & Capital Improvement Plan,
- ▶ the launch of new programs,
- ▶ applications for grant funds, &
- ▶ actions of citizens, committees & boards



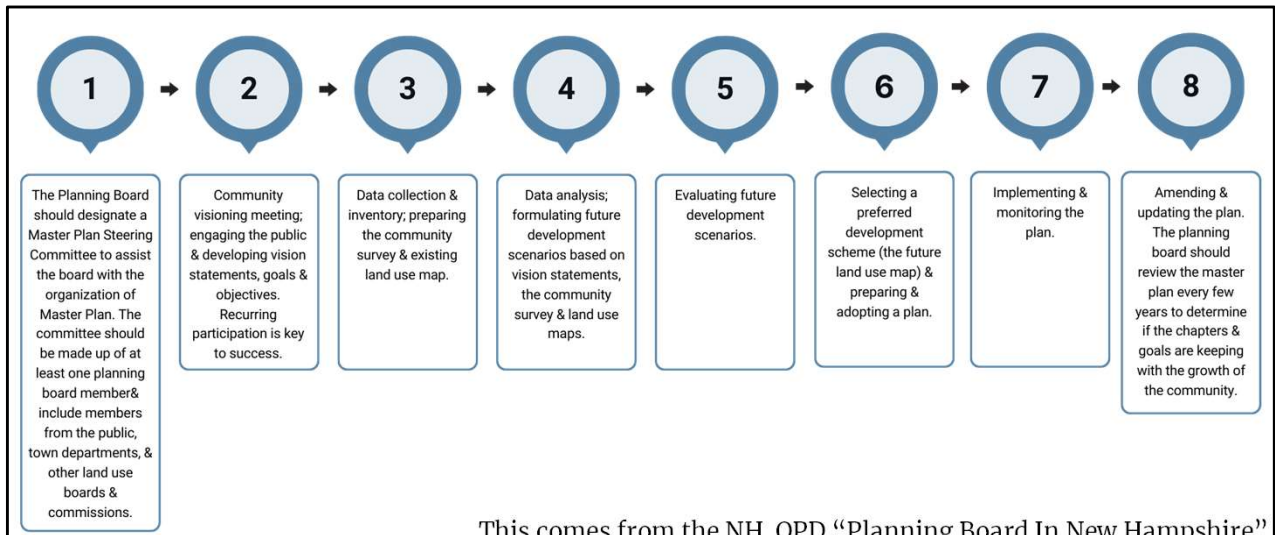
Narration: The success of a master plan in shaping the future growth patterns and influencing public policy decisions is dependent upon the degree to which the plan is carried out by those responsible for its implementation.

Land use regulations and ordinances are only one way a municipality can put at Master Plan to use.

Charting a Path Forward

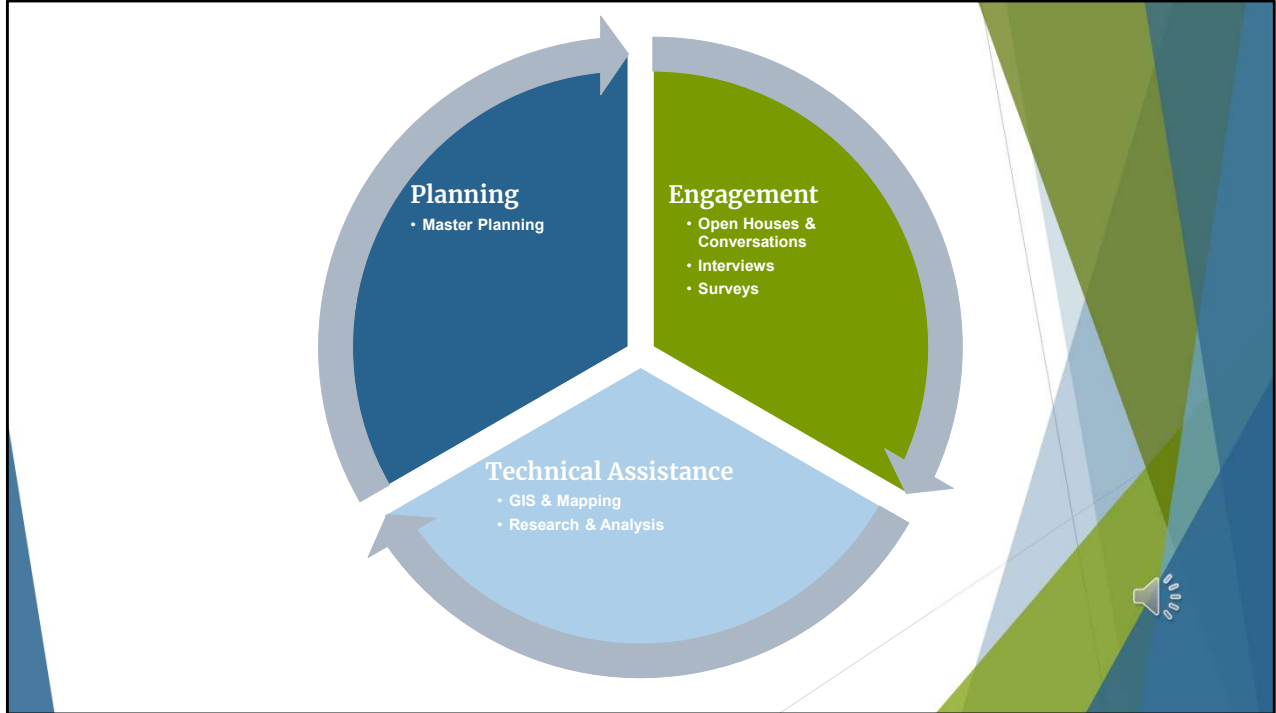
Implementation efforts are best when:

- ▶ rooted in local values & done with local support,
- ▶ aimed at local needs or opportunities,
- ▶ based on the capabilities & capacities of the town today (or anticipated in the future).



This comes from the NH OPD “Planning Board In New Hampshire”

Steps to Master Planning



Narration: The Council’s mission is to encourage effective community and regional planning for the economic development and conservation of natural, cultural and economic resources. This is accomplished by providing information, regional advocacy, technical assistance, community education, and direct services to the region.

Part of those direct services are Master Planning services. The Council works as a consultant to provide planning services and support for municipalities drafting or updating a Master Plan.

The Council Facilitates engagement with community conversations & collect resident and business input through:

- Hosting open houses and other opportunities for conversations
- Conducting targeted interviews
- And creating community-wide surveys to capture as many community voices as possible.

The Council has neutral and experienced facilitators who can keep discussions on-track & focused on identifying strategies & next steps.

The Council provides Technical Assistance to support local efforts & initiatives by:
writing & administering grants
providing GIS & mapping services,
collecting research & data,
analyzing data and survey results
then delivering a summary of those studies to be used in discussions and development
of the Master Plan's implementation plan.

Master Planning Resources

- ▶ Information Guides & Examples from NH Office of Planning & Development (OPD)
 - ▶ [Welcome - NH Economy](#)
 - ▶ Land use planning regulations
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/lxiv/674/674-2.htm>
- ▶ Direct assistance, Q & A, & data resources
 - ▶ Email info@nccouncil.org
 - ▶ Website www.nccouncil.org



Narration: We hope that you have found this to be a helpful introduction to Master Plans and how the Council supports municipalities to accomplish preparing, amending, or updating one for your own town. Many of the Council's services are provided to member communities at no additional charge while others are a fee-for-service basis.

Included here are links for additional resources available from the NH Office of Planning and Development.

If you have any questions or you are seeking direct assistance, please contact us by visiting our website or emailing us.

We look forward to assisting your municipality with its Master Planning needs.