

Master Plan Development

The following tasks provide a description of the work that NMCOG will perform under each element of the Master Plan:

Task 1 – Data Collection, Inventory and Analysis

The data contained in the town’s previous Master Plan is updated. In addition, GIS maps are created to visually display the data, where appropriate. Wherever possible, existing data is extracted from available town documents, such as the town’s Housing Production Plan, and the Open Space and Recreation Plan. In addition, NMCOG has the advantage of having compiled significant data through the completion of regional reports and studies, such as the *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*, the *Greater Lowell Regional Strategic Plan* and the *Regional Transportation Plan*.

Task 2 – Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives

A Community Visioning Session is conducted using a SWOT analysis, to engage residents and local officials in an interactive discussion. Participants will be asked to identify the Town’s assets and strengths, as well as weaknesses and liabilities. In addition, ideas will be sought for capitalizing upon the strengths, minimizing the weaknesses, and creating new opportunities for the community. An overall vision statement will be crafted based upon the input received at the visioning session, and at other public forums.

A working set of goals and objectives will be developed to help guide the formation of each element of the plan.

Task 3 – Land Use

The land use element will identify present land uses, examine remaining opportunities for development, describe local land use regulations and assess their impact on land use development and effectiveness in managing growth. Land use techniques for managing and directing growth will also be discussed. In addition, this element will also identify revisions to the town’s land use regulations, policies and procedures that are needed to make the town’s zoning and land use policies and practices consistent with the Master Plan. Maps depicting existing land use, future land use, and outlining areas suitable for future development and/or redevelopment are provided.

Task 4 – Housing

The housing element will identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs, as delineated in the Town’s draft Housing Production Plan. Data regarding the state of the town’s current housing stock will also be provided and broken out by tenure and age. Recommendations for creating diverse housing choices for all levels of income and age groups within the community will be formulated.

Task 5 – Economic Development

The economic development element will provide an overview of the Town’s existing economy, examine the strengths and weaknesses of individual economic sectors, and assess the potential of the town’s current economic base in meeting goals related to employment, tax base and overall economic strength. NMCOG reviews and evaluates the goals and implementation plan contained in the previous Master Plan to detail what has been achieved, what remains to be done, and assess whether the remaining elements are still pertinent and appropriate, with the assistance of the Committee.

The Town’s existing economic conditions are evaluated by examining the following:

1. Business characteristics and trends
2. Income, employment, labor force and wage characteristics
3. Non- residential valuations and local tax revenues
4. Available infrastructure to accommodate economic development (water, utilities and telecommunications)
5. Community assets and liabilities
6. Balance between economic development and quality of life

The future economic development outlook for the community is assessed through analyzing and documenting the following:

1. Availability of commercial zoned land for development (based on work completed under the land use element)
2. Trends in the local and regional economy
3. Employment projections
4. Workforce development
5. Evaluation of economic development programs and tools available to the community
6. Identification of potential development opportunities for specific geographic locations within the community.
7. Evaluation of permitting and regulatory issues related to economic development.

Recommendations within this section will also focus on the steps that can be taken by the Town to attract economic development that is appropriate.

Task 6 – Natural and Cultural Resources

The Natural and Cultural Resources element provides an assessment of the natural, cultural and historic resources located within the community, and details policies and strategies for the protection and management of such areas. Topics covered include: water resources, such as surface water bodies and aquifer recharge areas; flood hazard areas; geology and landscape; soils; prime farmland; vegetation; fisheries and wildlife; priority and estimated habitat areas; environmental issues; and historic features, structures and architecture. An overview of preservation planning within the community is provided, as well as an assessment of the protection and preservation tools used by the Town.

Task 7 - Open Space and Recreation Element

The Open Space and Recreation element will provide an inventory of recreation and open space resources as identified in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Policies and management strategies for managing, preserving and protecting these resources are also be detailed. To the extent possible, existing information contained within the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan is utilized.

Task 8 - Services and Facilities Element

The Services and Facilities element will include an inventory of municipally-owned facilities by age, capacity and function. The ability of facilities and services to accommodate future growth and development on town services and facilities is assessed. This element identifies the most important infrastructure, facilities and service needs for the next ten years, with particular attention paid to areas identified as having growth and redevelopment potential within the land use and economic development elements. Some communities include an optional sustainability chapter that covers energy, climate change, etc., or some of these topics can be addressed in the services and facilities chapter.

Task 9 - Traffic and Circulation

The Traffic and Circulation element provides an inventory of the town's transportation network. This information will be compiled from existing studies and sources, such as the *Regional Transportation Plan for the Northern Middlesex Region*, the *Route 113 Draft Study*, and the transportation database that are managed by NMCOG and MassDOT. Information is provided regarding the condition of the town's transportation infrastructure, including the roadway network, information on bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the structural condition of the town's bridges.

Task 10 -Implementation Plan

The implementation plan outlines specific actions and measures that must be taken to carry out the recommendations contained within the Master Plan. The implementation element will translate the generalized goals and objectives into specific action items. The entity responsible for implementing each action is identified, a priority and timeframe is established, and the cost range of each measure is estimated, if possible. The implementation measures may include such actions as changing land use and permitting policies and procedures, revising or creating zoning districts and bylaws, building and site design guidelines and/or standards, infrastructure investments, or recommendations for additional studies. Recommended procedures for monitoring the progress and the status of Master Plan implementation is also provided, where possible.

Deliverables:

Report Materials:

- Draft Master Plan Technical Papers with Discussion Questions for the Master Plan Committee's consideration
- Draft Master Plan chapters
- Draft Master Plan document (with implementation plan)

- Final Master Plan document (with implementation Plan)
- Master Plan Executive Summary

Maps included Master Plan Documents (minimum):

- Land Use
- Zoning
- Water Resources
- Open Space and Recreation Inventory
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Watershed and sub-basins
- Water supply resources, floodplain and aquifers
- Geology
- Prime farmland
- Priority and estimated habitat areas
- Roadway Functional Classification
- Traffic Volumes
- Vehicle Crash Statistics
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
- Bridges by Condition
- Developable Land
- Soils
- Housing Opportunities
- Water, Sewer and Stormwater Infrastructure

Public Meetings and Forums for Input:

- Kick-off meeting and Visioning Session (SWOT analysis)
- Development of a written survey and analysis using SurveyMonkey
- Visioning Sessions devoted to:
 1. Land Use, Housing and Economic Development;
 2. Open Space and Recreation, Natural and Cultural Resources
 3. Transportation, Infrastructure, Facilities and Services
- Community Public Meeting to receive input on the draft document, including the implementation plan.
- Master Plan Committee is encouraged to interview appropriate town staff, boards and committees