

10. Implementation



Master Plan

Relevant plans and policy documents:

- ***Financial Management Policies & Objectives, Town of Amherst [2007]***
- ***Amherst Visions: An Interim Report [1998]***
- ***Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals [SCOG] [1973]***

Introduction

Under Massachusetts state law the Amherst Planning Board has the authority to create and update a Master Plan for Amherst. The *Planning Amherst Together* process engaged hundreds of residents in a broad, collaborative effort to develop a Master Plan. Once the Plan is adopted the community will need to shift its energies towards successful implementation of the strategies it has identified.

This chapter of the Master Plan provides guidance for maintaining accountability, monitoring activities, creating appropriate development regulations and procedures, and involving the community in implementation of the Plan. It recommends a number of actions to support effective implementation of the Master Plan for the Town of Amherst. Following this Introduction it is divided into the following sections.

1. How to Use this Plan summarizes the basic steps for how the Plan should be used to affect public and private decision-making in Amherst.

2. Actions outlines objectives and a series of supporting actions that will facilitate implementation of the Plan. The objectives touch upon the following broad implementation considerations:

- **Provide resources for implementing the Plan.** Beginning with the Priority Implementation steps outlined in Chapter 2, the Town should secure and allocate the funding necessary to implement priority actions, through updating the Capital Plans and annual departmental budgets.
- **Monitor and evaluate implementation.** Implementation will be monitored on a regular basis, including evaluating, reporting results, promoting successes, and maintaining public and media relations.
- **Involve a wide variety of stakeholders in implementation.** Residents and other stakeholders shall be actively involved with implementing the Plan.
- **Develop appropriate regulatory tools to implement the Plan.** The Town of Amherst should update key development regulations and processes for plan review.
- **Require concurrence with the Plan.** The Town shall require concurrence with the Master Plan in rezoning or development approvals, and call for written interpretations of decisions in order to create a public record for consistency.
- **Update the Plan every five years.** The Town of Amherst should develop a community process to update the Plan at a minimum of every five years.

An Implementation Matrix is included in the Appendix which organizes the Master Plan strategies into a simplified chart format. Above and beyond

the Priority Implementation actions listed in Chapter 2, the matrix provides a format for Town policy-makers to use in moving from a ‘work list’ to action plans under each area of public interest that identify who will be responsible for and involved in implementation, and what the timelines should be for undertaking specific strategies.

A. How to Use the Plan

The Plan is to be used on a regular basis as public and private decisions are made concerning development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives, and other matters affecting the community. The following is a summary of how it should be used.

1. Annual Work Programs and Budgets

Individual departments and administrators should be cognizant of the recommendations of the Plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. Several strategies can be implemented in this way. Review of these work programs by Select Board, Town Manager, Town Meeting, Finance Committee, School Committee, School Superintendent, Library Trustees and Library Director should likewise occur in accordance with the Plan’s strategies.

2. Development Approvals

Administrative and legislative approvals of development proposals, including rezoning and subdivision plats, should be a central means of implementing the Plan. In fact, zoning codes can and should be updated in response to regulatory strategies presented in the Plan.

3. Capital Plans

Annual and five-year capital plans should be consistent with the Plan’s land use policies and infrastructure recommendations. New improvements that are not reflected in the Plan – and which could dramatically impact the Plan’s land use recommendations – should necessitate at least a minor update to the Plan.

4. Economic Incentives

Economic incentives such as Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs) enabling tax increment financing (as has been developed for the Cushman General Store and Atkins Farm Market) should be reviewed in light of recommendations of the Plan. These incentives should be integrated with other Plan policies to ensure consistency, particularly with the Plan’s land use recommendations.

5. Private Development Decisions

Property owners and developers should consider the recommendations of the Plan in their planning and investment decisions. Public decision-

makers will be using the Plan as a guide in their development-related deliberations, such as zoning matters and infrastructure requests. Property owners and developers should have an understanding of the Master Plan when submitting proposals to public bodies.

6. Future Interpretation

The Planning Board and other responsible entities should provide a written interpretation of major items that are unclear or which are not fully addressed in the Plan. These bodies may call upon outside experts and other groups for advice.

B. Actions

Outlined below are the strategies which support the implementation of the Plan. For their successful implementation, each strategy will require development of a timeframe and identification of key entities responsible for implementation, including Town departments, boards and committees, and appropriate others. A matrix of this Plan's strategies is included in the Appendix.

<p>OBJECTIVE IM.1 Provide sufficient resources to implement the Master Plan.</p>

<p>The Plan identifies the need to provide adequate resources to implement certain strategies. For the successful completion of many strategies, new resources will need to be obtained; for others, reallocating existing resources may be appropriate.</p>
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STRATEGIES

IM.1.A Develop a Long-term Financial Planning Process.

The Town should conduct a public process for determining short- and long-term financial priorities for the operating and capital budget needs of the community, in coordination with the policies, objectives, and strategies of this Plan.

IM.1.B Update Capital Plans based on the Master Plan.

Five year capital Plans will be updated in line with the Master Plan. A Capital Plan is a fundamental management document that outlines projected capital needs, funding estimates and sources, and timeframes for completion. In updating Capital Plans each year, the Town should monitor implementation to ensure that they are consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan.

IM.1.C Prepare annual departmental work programs and operating budgets with awareness of the Master Plan.

Departmental work programs and operating budgets will demonstrate consistency with the Master Plan.

IM.1.D Identify and secure funds for prioritized initiatives. (This could include grants, tax measures, bonds, private investments, etc.)

Funding efforts should focus specifically on those strategies that the community has identified as being of high priority. Funding may come from the Town, other governmental sources (state, federal), tax measures, private sector investment, or a combination thereof. The community should seek to maximize the use of non-municipal resources. This strategy should occur in line with annual budget cycles.

IM.1.E Award economic and regulatory incentives based on consistency with the Master Plan.

The Town of Amherst will determine appropriate economic and regulatory incentives that could be instituted to achieve critical development and redevelopment objectives, as recommended by the Master Plan

IM.1.F Monitor and ensure fiscal accountability.

The Town of Amherst will monitor and ensure fiscal accountability in undertaking all of its responsibilities, including those associated with implementation of the Master Plan.

OBJECTIVE IM.2 Monitor and evaluate implementation.

Implementation of the Plan will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. This will ensure that the Plan is successfully followed and will result in desired changes in the community. Specific activities will include issuing an annual report and publicizing examples of successful implementation.

STRATEGIES**IM.2.A Form a Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) to oversee implementation of the Master Plan.**

The new Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) will be a successor to the CPC, responsible for helping to direct plan implementation. MPIC will work with responsible Town boards/committees and departments to identify responsible entities and a timeframe for specific strategies. The Committee will monitor and regularly report on the progress of implementation efforts.

IM.2.B Prepare and issue bi-annual reports that summarize the status of all Master Plan actions.

Working with the Planning Board and others as necessary, MPIC will develop and issue a bi-annual Master Plan report to the community and the media at a public meeting, on the Town website, and through other means. The report will summarize the status of implementation of all Master Plan strategies. It will highlight key strategies that have been completed over the

course of the previous two years. It will also identify emerging issues and any delays in implementation or conflicts between strategies that need to be addressed by the community. Changes or additions to the Plan will also be highlighted in the report, including any new priority implementation steps recommended by the Planning Board. MPIC will also issue or facilitate periodic bulletins or notices regarding significant Master Plan actions.

OBJECTIVE IM.3 Involve a wide variety of stakeholders in implementation.

As implementation of the Master Plan gets underway, the Town of Amherst will collaborate with a host of stakeholders. This will include local boards and commissions, community organizations, and other parties with particular interest in specific objectives and strategies. Such partnerships will be critical to successful implementation of the Plan.

STRATEGIES**IM.3.A Identify and engage non-governmental partners to assist with implementation.**

Responsible staff and committees will identify and engage non-government partners to assist in implementing key strategies of the Plan. These partners will include citizens, civic organizations, institutions, and businesses. These partners will be critical to success. For particular strategies the Town may decide to appoint a public-private task force to lead implementation.

IM.3.B Establish a program to provide ongoing public education on the Plan.

The residents of Amherst can also play an important role in implementing the Master Plan. Public participation has been a significant component in the development of the Plan. The MPIC should create a public outreach and education program to provide residents with ongoing opportunities to become familiar with the Plan, and to understand their role in achieving the goals in the Plan. The Town's web site can continue to be an important source of information and interaction.

IM.3.C Provide ongoing educational opportunities on innovative planning and development practices for the MPIC, Planning Board, Select Board, and other elected and appointed officials.

The Plan calls for some innovative development concepts. Town staff should organize educational programs and materials that provide examples from other communities. These programs may include site visits to other communities to observe firsthand development projects that may serve as appropriate examples for Amherst.

IM.3.D Provide final copies of the Master Plan on the Town web site and at libraries.

Upon completion and approval, final copies of the Master Plan will be made available via the Town website as part of the education and outreach process. Making these documents available on the website will also allow developers and property owners to become familiar with the Plan and its development recommendations.

OBJECTIVE IM.4 Develop appropriate regulatory tools to implement the Master Plan.

The Master Plan has identified the need for updated development regulations that are aligned with the community’s land use objectives. Adopting new regulatory tools will facilitate plan implementation.

STRATEGIES

IM.4.A Update development regulations as recommended in the Master Plan.

Amherst’s development regulations will be updated as recommended in the Plan. For example, the Town should update its zoning code and development ordinances to ensure that regulations reflect the community’s vision for future land use, resource preservation, and appropriate types of development.

IM.4.B Monitor the implementation of new regulations and correct as needed.

As new regulations are used, the outcomes will be monitored to determine if the regulations are achieving the expected results as recommended in the Master Plan. If the outcomes are not as expected, the regulations will be modified as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE IM.5 – Require concurrence with the Master Plan.

Future decisions in the community regarding development, capital improvements, and budgeting will concur with the applicable provisions of the Master Plan and the Capital Plan.

STRATEGIES

IM.5.A Require concurrence in rezonings and other major development approvals.

Major development approvals and rezonings will concur with the applicable policies of the Master Plan. All such applicable actions by boards, commissions, and staff shall document such concurrence in all decisions. A

summary of Master Plan compliance will be included as part of the annual report of every Town board/committee and department.

IM.5.B Require written interpretations of the Plan by the Planning Board.

Upon request, interpretation of the policies of the Plan should be prepared in writing to create a public record. This will ensure consistency in applying these planning documents in day-to-day situations. Such interpretations made by the Planning Board will be shared with other entities to determine concurrence on the interpretation. This may be coordinated by staff or addressed at a joint work session.

IM.5.C Require staff reports to reference the Master Plan.

All staff reports related to policy recommendations, annual work programs, and budgets shall reference relevant Master Plan recommendations.

OBJECTIVE IM.6 – Update the Master Plan at least every five years.

The Master Plan shall be formally updated on a 5-year basis. This is a sufficient timeframe within which to consider changing conditions that may affect the Plan's policies. If circumstances in the community change abruptly, the Planning Board shall initiate an update in a shorter timeframe, as necessary.

STRATEGIES

IM.6.A Design the Master Plan updating process.

The Planning Board, advised by MPIC, will design a process by which the Master Plan will be updated. The Board will also work with staff to determine the resources necessary for undertaking an update and shall recommend the funding and other resources needed to the Select Board.

IM.6.B Prepare an updated Master Plan.

MPIC will lead the process to update the Master Plan, with oversight by the Planning Board. The process should incorporate public involvement similar to the effort to prepare this plan. Other aspects of the process shall be defined as well. The total process for completing and adopting the update should take less than 18 months.