

# How To...

# Manage Community Growth

*“We can grow in ways that fit our traditional patterns of settlements, and that enhance already sprawled areas.”*

*“Good local land use laws can set the stage for great and sustainable development.”*

Community Rules:  
A NE Guide to Smart Growth Strategies, 2002, p8.

## Introduction

As a Planning Board Member you may be asked: What are you doing to control growth and sprawling development? What is smart growth? How can we plan growth to achieve sustainable development that balances community well-being, economic vitality, and environmental protection needs?

More people are asking these questions because of their importance to the quality of our living and working environments. People want Planning Boards to address traffic jams, open lands sold and subdivided, inadequate public facilities and services, and rising costs (i.e. taxes) to pay for public services.

The answer to these questions is the fundamental purpose of community planning. The art and science of planning has evolved from initial layouts aimed at arranging buildings and streets. The focus then was on architectural design and physical appearance. Today, the focus is as broad as the multiple issues that confront community decision-makers: population changes, economic development, social equity, housing development, transportation, education, health, and environment.

The community planning process consists of identifying issues, projecting needs, setting goals, developing options, making and implementing decisions. This process is comprehensive in scope, coordinated with other issues, and value added/results oriented. It recognizes growth and change are inevitable and aims to accommodate them with minimal, unintended consequences. Called by another name, it is growth management.

## Integrate Growth Management with Master Planning Activities

So to answer the questions, Planning Boards need to link growth management with traditional Master Planning. This Guide describes the elements of a growth management program and places it in the context of traditional planning activities, such as land use planning, zoning, and capital improvement programming. It will provide Planning Board members with ways to address growth management, and with policies and implementation strategies they can adopt and implement (e.g. growth permit process, development impact fees, transfer development rights).

Use of the Guide will increase understanding of planning concepts and their interrelationships, provide knowledge needed to implement planning techniques, meet local public demand to address this critical issue, and result in better policies to achieve sustainable development.

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Aerial photo shows growth pattern resulting from mill development on the Lamprey River in Newmarket, NH

“ The problems of growth are not to be solved by limiting the scope, program or location of development. They must be resolved by rethinking the nature and quality of growth itself, in every context. People argue heatedly about growth: where, how much, what type, what density and if it is really necessary at all.”

“Any region with a high growth demand has several options. [The region] can try to limit overall growth; let the surrounding communities grow uncontrollably until they become a continuous mass; attempt to accommodate growth in re-development and infill locations, or plan new ... growth areas within reasonable transit proximity of the city center. Every region needs to find an appropriate mix of these very different options.”

The New Urbanism, 1994, p.xiii



Use Site Analysis to show current development as a first step in managing growth.

## Growth Management in New Hampshire

The concept of growth management evolves from state planning law. New Hampshire law, RSA 9-A:1:III (a), states: “the [state] comprehensive development plan shall include: state policies to provide for the orderly growth and development of the state and to maximize smart growth.”

Further New Hampshire law, RSA 9-A:1:IV, states: “local planning boards are encouraged to develop plans which are consistent with the policies and priorities established in the [state] comprehensive development plan.”

In addition, New Hampshire law, RSA 9-B:3, states: “smart growth means the control of haphazard and unplanned development and the use of land, which results over time, in the inflation of the amount of land used per unit of human development, and of the degree of dispersal between such land areas. “

And finally, New Hampshire law, RSA 674:22, states: “The local legislative body may ... regulate and control the timing of development. Any ordinance imposing such a control may be adopted only after preparation and adoption by the planning board of a master plan and a capital improvement program and shall be based upon a growth management process intended to assess and balance community development needs and consider regional development needs.”

## Growth Management in Communities

Within this context, many communities in NH are beginning to include growth management policies in their Master Plan. Managing growth (the development of land to accommodate population increases and related public facility and service needs) is the fundamental purpose of community planning. An effective community planning program is an effective growth management program. Is there any substantial difference between planning and growth management?

No! The purpose of growth management, as the RSAs state, is to regulate and control the timing of development to balance growth with competing needs both within the community and its region.

Similarly, the application of smart growth and sustainable development principles at the community level is intended to balance competing economic, fiscal, environmental, and social needs within a geographic location.

## Growth Management Issues

To manage growth a Planning Board needs planning policies and implementation strategies that address the amount, type, location, appearance, costs, timing, and financing of growth.

**Amount** The amount involves understanding demographics and projecting population and characteristics of people living and moving into the community. Planning and managing the amount of growth is important because the demand drives the need for the number, type, and cost of housing; the number and type of supporting land uses (e.g. commercial, grocery, and related support service stores); and public facility and service needs (e.g. streets, parks, police, schools, fire protection, water and sewage treatment).

**Type** The type involves identifying what kind of growth will be accommodated. Typically this is residential housing development, but may include other forms of growth for commercial, recreational, industrial, government, or other land uses.

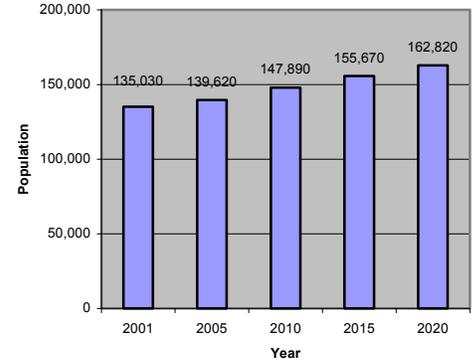
**Location** The location involves identifying where several types of land uses will be located to accommodate the projected growth. This includes residential neighborhood areas whether in a town center, suburban, or rural locale; various commercial areas in a town center, neighborhood service, or regional service locale; industrial areas; recreation areas, and public facilities and services. This information should be in the Master Plan Land Use element.

**Appearance** The appearance involves what the development will look like. The appearance includes the site or subdivision design, as well as the physical appearance or architecture of the development.

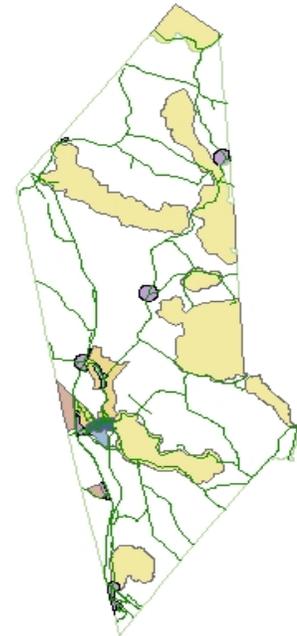
**Costs** Growth costs money, but it also produces benefits. Planning smartly means knowing the costs as well as the benefits. Costs include construction and ongoing operation and maintenance of public facilities and services. They also include negative, sometimes unquantifiable, consequences, e.g., loss of open lands or views.

**Timing** The timing involves establishing when the growth will be accommodated. This is done by writing policies and strategies to stage or phase development over time. It may involve defining growth boundaries or limiting the number of residential building permits issued each year. Or it may mean only permitting development when timed with public and private infrastructure investments.

**Financing** The financing involves determining who will pay for additional public facilities and services, capital expenditures and operational costs, and how they will be paid for, e.g. bonds, annual budget, or developer payment of impact fees.



Amount: Population Chart for SRPC Region



Location: Types of land uses in proposed New Durham Master Plan



Type of development: Municipal service center in Lee, NH



Type of development: Residential, multi-family, infill development in Dover, NH

*“Planners must remind themselves—and their constituencies—to reach beyond the hot topics of the moment to understand, long-range, how to manage community growth and change. And that still requires the tried and tested techniques of growth management and comprehensive planning.”*

Doug Porter, *APA Planning*, Viewpoint, November 2003.

For more on Issues, Policies, and Implementation Strategies see: “Achieving Smart Growth in New Hampshire”, NH Office of Energy and Planning, April 2003.



Type of development: Business Park in Farmington, NH

## Growth Management Issues, Polices, and Strategies

Growth Management Issues & Location in the Master Plan	Policies & Strategies
<p><u>Amount of Development</u></p> <p><b>Master Plan</b> Land Use Section Housing Section</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> State what level of development is desired, e.g. permit the construction of 250 dwelling units per year.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> State how the policy will be achieved, e.g., adopt a Growth Management Ordinance to set the amount of development permitted per year at 250 dwelling units.</p>
<p><u>Location of Development</u></p> <p><b>Master Plan</b> Land Use Section</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> State where the development is desired, e.g. Town center.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> Amend the Zoning Ordinance to define growth areas and land use districts.</p>
<p><u>Timing of Development</u></p> <p><b>Master Plan</b> Land Use, Community Facilities, Public Finance Sections</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> State timeframe in which development is desired.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> Adopt an ordinance to insure new development only is permitted when adequate facilities are provided.</p>
<p><u>Type of Development</u></p> <p><b>Master Plan</b> Land Use Section Transportation Section Housing Section Public Facilities Section</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> State what type of development is desired, e.g. research park.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> State how the type of development will be achieved, e.g., amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit the desired land uses.</p>
<p><u>Appearance of Development</u></p> <p><b>Master Plan</b> Vision Section Character and Appearance Section</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> State what is the desired community appearance for various types of development</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> State how the desired appearance of the community will be achieved, e.g., adopt architectural design guidelines</p>
<p><u>Financing of Development</u></p> <p><b>Master Plan</b> Public Finance Section Capital Improvement Program</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> State the community’s desired fiscal condition, e.g. balanced budget.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> State how the desired fiscal condition will be achieved, e.g. adopt an impact fee ordinance requiring developer payment of costs of growth.</p>

## Growth Management and the Master Plan

A local Master Plan describes a community's vision for the future and how it plans to achieve that vision. A Master Plan can address growth management by including these issues in each section of the Master Plan. The Land Use section addresses where; the Housing section addresses type and affordability; the Transportation section addresses how to move the population and goods; the Public Facilities section addresses service and facility needs; and the Capital Improvement Program addresses costs, timing, and financing.

By adding a Population and Growth Management section to your Master Plan, the community could address timing. This section should include policies that address the following questions:

- How much population growth does your community want?
- Where should the population be located?
- How should it be accommodated (i.e., single family, duplex, multi-family housing)?
- Will it be affordable by the target population?
- What will be the appearance or design for the development?
- How much will it cost?
- How will it be timed to balance it with environmental, public facilities and fiscal constraints of the municipality?
- How will the growth be financed?

Policy answers to these questions are linked to other Master Plan sections, such as land use, housing, public facilities, character and appearance, as well as the Capital Improvement Program. A well-developed population and growth management section will define how the community's population growth relates to the regional growth, the community's vision for growth, and the intended way to accommodate the growth. The population and growth management section for a Master Plan might include:

- Policies (i.e. what you want to achieve or commitments to do something—in the form of goals, principles, and standards).
- Implementation Strategies (i.e. how you intend to achieve it).
- Background research and analysis for the policies and implementation strategies (located in the Master Plan Appendix) including:
  - Description of existing population, social and economic demographic characteristics.
  - Population growth projections for the community and region.
  - Current housing stock by type and cost.
  - Current and projected costs.
  - Current and potential sources of revenue for costs.
  - Potential methods to reduce costs or accommodate growth more efficiently.



Appearance: New England style gas station complex in Durham, NH

*“For the region [New England] to retain its charms, and for our generation to do its part by leaving New England better than we found it, we must take an active interest in how the land is developed.”*

*“Development, depending on what it is, where it is sited, and how it is designed, can add or detract in various ways. Rarely is it all good or all bad. But what is built, where it is sited, and how it is designed, ends up making a real difference in how New England looks and feels, and how it functions, both economically and environmentally.”*

Community Rules: A NE Guide to Smart Growth Strategies, 2002, p.2.



Appearance: Conventional design gas station in Any Town, NH



Timing and Amount: Milton, NH on the west bank of the Salmon Falls River

## Growth Management Issues During Site Plan or Subdivision Plan Review

When the Planning Board is reviewing site or subdivision plans, consider some growth management issues as well as the basic questions (see SRPC *How To Get the Development You Planned*):

Where is the proposed site development or subdivision located?

What type of land use is proposed? Is it consistent with the Master Plan?

What is the appearance or design of the development? Does it reflect smart growth management principles, e.g. nodal development, controlled access management, clustered residential neighborhood)? Does it reflect the traditional New England architectural character?

What is the timing of the site development or subdivision in relation to needed public facilities and services? Compare the development to the municipality's Six Year Capital Improvement Program. Is there an adopted Capital Improvement Program?

What is the overall impact (i.e., physical, social, environmental and fiscal) of the development? You may require the developer to conduct a growth impact analysis to help assess the impact the growth from the development will have on the area and determine what measures must be taken to minimize the impacts. For a full description of what should be included in a growth impact analysis, see the Strafford Regional Planning Commission's Guide to Growth Impact Analysis. A growth impact analysis may not answer all of your questions, or it may claim there are no impacts. The Planning Board may require a peer review by a professional planner. Payment for the review can be requested from the applicant.

How will the impacts of the site development or subdivision be mitigated, and how will the costs of development be paid? Will the costs be offset by the benefits? Should development impact fees be charged? (Does your community have a Development Impact Fee ordinance?) Is financing or bonding required? (Does your community have a standard Performance Guarantee Agreement to insure the site and any graded open areas are stabilized or infrastructure improvements completed in case the developer has difficulties and the project is terminated?)

Clear answers to these and other questions will provide your community with the best information to make an informed decision and insure you get the development you planned.

*“And you may ask yourself  
What is that beautiful house?  
And you may ask yourself  
Where does that highway go?  
And you may ask yourself  
Am I right? ... am I wrong?  
And you may tell yourself  
... what have I done?”*

Talking Heads, “Once in a Lifetime”, from the Remain in Light album, 1980.



Appearance: Commercial use of historic building in Durham, NH

## Growth Management & Smart Growth

Some people see smart growth and growth management as the same, and others see them as different. Similarly with community planning, some people say they have been implementing community planning and growth management programs for years. The issue is whether you are reviewing and permitting subdivisions or site plans based on implementing basic community planning. For example, your municipality may be permitting single lot subdivisions without implementing a design principle for creating a traditional, compact residential neighborhood. Or, you could be in the situation of making decisions without knowing which principles to apply to make “smart” planning decisions. It is like playing baseball in a sandlot game versus in a professionally coached, trained, and organized game with strategies, plays, and techniques.

To accomplish “smart” growth management—that is being effective—it is important to have professional community planning guidance and knowledge. Growing “smart” can save millions of dollars in the operating costs of your public facilities and services, as well as add millions of dollars to real property values and appreciation.

## Growth Management & Sustainable Development

The goal of “smart” growth management is to achieve sustainable development. Sustainable development balances three community goals: economic vitality, community well-being, and environmental resource management. When only one or two of these goals are considered, it usually results in an imbalance in another area. The objective is to understand the whole picture, not just the immediate impacts a project may have on the site. Any land use decision that disrupts this delicate balance can affect the community’s character. Sustainability is a goal that planners and community decision-makers strive for every time a decision is made affecting development. It is about ensuring a better quality of life now, and for generations to come. It is “smart growth planning.”

Again, the Master Plan describes what, where, when, and how smart growth or sustainable development should occur. It may address the need to protect open lands, which leads the Planning Board to make a recommendation to adopt new open space subdivision regulations. Or the Master Plan may state minimum lot sizes or maximum densities for residential development. The community’s land use regulations are driven by the Master Plan policies and standards. The Master Plan empowers the Planning Board to adopt “smart” growth regulations, and makes regulations easier to defend if challenged.

### NH Principles for Smart Growth

1. Maintain traditional compact settlement patterns to efficiently use land, resources, and investments in infrastructure;
2. Foster the traditional character of New Hampshire downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods by encouraging a human scale of development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life;
3. Incorporate a mix of uses to provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services, and social opportunities for all members of the community;
4. Provide choices and safety in transportation to create livable, walkable communities that increase accessibility for people of all ages, whether on foot, bicycle, or in motor vehicles;
5. Preserve New Hampshire's working landscape by sustaining farms, forests, and rural resource lands to maintain contiguous tracts of open land and to minimize land use conflicts;
6. Protect environmental quality by minimizing impacts from human activities and planning for and maintaining natural areas that contribute to the health and quality of life of communities and people in New Hampshire;
7. Involve the community in planning and implementation to ensure that development retains and enhances the sense of place, traditions, goals, and values of the local community;
8. Manage growth locally in the New Hampshire tradition, and work with neighboring towns to achieve common goals and address common more effectively.

Source: “Achieving Smart Growth in New Hampshire”, NH Office of Energy & Planning, April 2003.



*Strafford  
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Planning  
Commission*

*Visit our website at  
[www.trafford.org](http://www.trafford.org)*

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## **Addressee**

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## **Growth Management is Master Planning and It Must be Smart!**

- Growth management is the fundamental purpose of Master Planning.
- Growth management guides the amount, type, location, appearance, costs, timing, and financing of development and public facilities and services.
- Smart growth includes the use of professional planning advice.
- Planning decision-makers can achieve sustainable development by adopting and implementing Master Plan policies for smart growth management.
- Smart growth implementation strategies include:
  - Land use zoning districts with densities and intensities of uses balanced with a ...
  - ...growth management ordinance to phase in the issuance of residential building permits
  - Adequate public facilities ordinance
  - Capital improvement ordinance
  - Impact fee ordinance

We can achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life.