

A Facility Master Plan

Is one needed?



Why plan at all?

Usually, it's because we know that change is needed or that it's inevitable and we'd like to influence how it affects us. Change can be an increase or decrease in staff, clients, services, revenues or membership. Sometimes it is in response to an opportunity to acquire land or to start a new program. Eventually this gets around to the need to modify or add physical facilities.

Let's consider two important points. First, a facility master plan should spring directly from an organization's mission. Second, the answer to every physical need is not a new building. It may be an issue of scheduling or setting priorities.

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What do we need to start planning?

The key to a successful master plan is a solid, well documented set of objectives that has been affirmed by the people who will implement them. A master planning process will not work well without this.

You must know where you want to go, or there is no point in setting out. As the objectives are defined, try not to let them become a physical plan. No solutions should be part of them, only what you want to accomplish.



What are we trying to do?

We're trying to translate a mission and objectives into a physical image of the future.

However, the desired future may take several phases to realize or to be constructed. A master plan might not be needed if it could all be done at once.

An important part of a master plan is to avoid building part of the first phase right where the third phase will need to go. Unfortunately, this happens, and it's obviously not good. Master planning means looking into the future, and it's always difficult.



We can see clearly into the next few years, but then things get hazy.

How can we be successful?

We have to start with what we know now: your objectives and your current physical situation. And we have to realize that, regardless of what we might hope for, it is not likely that we can make radical changes quickly. But significant change is possible and in fact desirable. Even incremental change is powerful over time.

Can we afford what's being planned?

Make some kind of projection about funding. It can be a range. You can adjust it, even change it radically as you go, but it's not good to start without it. Then, as part of the planning process, you can look at what you think you'll need in facilities and work back to what they will cost. Bringing together needs and funding is the challenge.



Planning for projects that you can not afford wastes time, and it is frustrating and unproductive. It saps energy. It leads to pared-down plans that lack energy and enthusiasm. The effort of preparing a funding projection will tell you a lot about yourselves and where your organization is really capable of going.

What are the benefits?

Knowing what steps you want to take in the future is very beneficial. Here's what you'll have:

- ♦ Definition of the first step.
- ♦ Confidence to take it, since you know where you'll end up.
- ♦ Ability to act on opportunities that come up, knowing how they'll affect the future.
- ♦ Planning and financial information to use in making other organizational decisions.
- ♦ A Master Plan that will create confidence in your organization by members, employees and others.

