



**MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Cultural Resources
Best Management Practices**

Architectural and Engineering Plans

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www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/conservation/cultural-resources/dcr-plans-library.html



Flat file drawer with foldered plan sets.

Goal: DCR's architectural and engineering plans collection is an important resource essential to the agency's ability to conduct business. The plans include both originals and copies made by DCR and its many predecessor agencies. In many cases a copy may be the only available form of a plan. The goal of these guidelines is to protect and preserve plans that must be retained permanently as legal copies of record and to enable efficient management of non-permanent plans. For management of archival records other than plans see the BMP for *Records Management in Park Offices*.

Guidelines:

A large percentage of DCR's plans are held in the Boston office, however substantial collections of original and unique plans are also held at regional, park, forest, waterways, and watershed management offices throughout the state. These guidelines are meant to help staff manage their plans collections on-site. Staff should contact the Plans Archivist if permanent plans are no longer needed on-site, are extremely fragile and threatened, or if proper storage facilities cannot be maintained.

❖ Storing Plans

- Avoid storing plans in attics, basements or anywhere they will be affected by extreme changes in temperature and humidity. This is the most important thing you can do to preserve plans for the long term. The simple installation of an air conditioner or de-humidifier can have a real impact on the life of the plans.
- Check your storage area periodically for evidence of minor flooding, leaky roofs or pipes, open windows, or damage from insects, rodents and bats. Clean flat file drawers of rodent debris.
- Always choose metal storage cabinets, since the acids in wood cabinets will transfer to the documents over time making the paper brittle.
- Flat file cabinets and rolled storage containers should rest on bases that lift them several inches off the ground to protect the plans from minor flooding. If a flat file cabinet does not have a base, do not store anything in the bottom drawer.
- Avoid storing plans or plans cabinets under pipes and do not store plans in trash bags, which may be mistakenly thrown out.
- Do not store brochures, contract specifications, or other small documents in flat file drawers with plans.
- Do not put heavy boxes or objects on top of flat files. Extra weight can dent the cabinets and affect the alignment of the drawers.

❖ **Records Management for Plans**

Permanent Records

All documents created by state agencies are designated as either permanent or temporary records by the State Records Conservation Board. To find out how long to keep architectural and engineering plans, see the summary chart below. For complete information, consult the Statewide Records Retention Schedule: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcrmu/rmuidx.htm>

<u>Plan Type</u>	<u>Retention Period</u>
• As-built drawing sets or best available copies of plans (including hand-annotated record copies)	Permanent
• Land surveys undertaken by the state	Permanent
• Plans relating to registered land	Permanent
• Shop drawings	Life of the facility or improvement
• Facilities disability access plans	3 years after the life of the improvement
• Duplicate facilities management sets	Life of the facility or building
• Duplicate convenience sets	Retain until no longer needed

Temporary Records

- After the legal retention period has ended, contact the Plans Archivist.
- Obsolete paper and plastic signs or posters in flat file drawers should be recycled or destroyed. Use DCR dumpsters, not those on church or school grounds.

Transferring Permanent Records No Longer Needed On-Site to the Central Plans Library

- When plans that are considered permanent are no longer needed on-site at a Parks Office, contact the Plans Archivist to transfer them to DCR's central Plans Library in Boston.
- When a Park Supervisor is about to retire, contact the DCR Plans Archivist to ensure that any permanent plans no longer needed on-site are retained and transferred to the central Plans Library in Boston.

❖ **Requests for Copies of Plans**

- **IN-HOUSE REQUESTS FOR PLANS** – For copies of plans held in the central Plans Library in Boston or to have plans from your collections scanned for current use by staff or consultants, use the DCR Plans Request Form - http://dcr.env.govt.state.ma.us/forms/planning_and_engineering/Plans%20Request%20Form.xml
- **PUBLIC REQUESTS FOR PLANS** – When a member of the public or another government agency requests copies of plans it is considered a Public Records Request. The requester should submit a written request to DCR's legal department in Boston. Plans can only be released after Legal approval. <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/inside-our-agency/public-records-requests/>

❖ **Coping with Disasters and Fragile or Damaged Plans**

- In the event of a major storm, protect plans from anticipated flooding by moving them up off the floor.
- After a major storm, check storage areas for damage and notify the Plans Archivist of any problems. Do not destroy wet or damaged plans since they can often be repaired by a professional conservator.