

ELEMENT I

Introduction – Loomis and its Future

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I. Introduction - Loomis and its Future

The Town of Loomis adopted its first General Plan in 1987. This General Plan is an update in response to changes in the community and the region since the Town was incorporated in 1984, and in the 14 years since the adoption of the first General Plan. Although a variety of amendments to the General Plan have been adopted since 1987, this is the first comprehensive update.

The Town of Loomis

Loomis is a small, semi-rural community located in western Placer County in California's agricultural Central Valley. Incorporated in 1984, the Town is located within a fast-growing metropolitan region approximately 25 miles northeast of the City of Sacramento, along interstate 80. Loomis is in the western portion of the Loomis Basin, an 80-square mile area of the Placer County foothills. Loomis maintains a distinct small-town, semi-rural character through large residential lots with continuing agricultural activities, rural roads and equestrian trails, a compact downtown "village" area, the preservation of historic structures, and extensive open space areas.

Loomis is divided into two distinct areas by interstate 80, traversing northeast through the center of Town. The area north of I-80 contains all of the community's existing retail, office and industrial development, as well as higher density residential development, bounded by larger, semi-rural residential lots. The area south of I-80 is almost exclusively rural and residential in character. The Town's corporate boundaries, the study/planning area for this General Plan, and the land use designations of this General Plan are shown on Figure 3-1, the Land Use Diagram, page 27.

The revitalization and beautification of the downtown commercial area is underway. A *Town Center Master Plan* was adopted in December 1992 as an element of the General Plan (see page 42). The plan calls for a compact, pedestrian-oriented, commercial village, which includes the rehabilitation and reuse of local historic structures. Additional retail and office development is located predominantly along Taylor Road, the community's major commercial corridor. The Taylor Road corridor is also the location of some older industrial and automotive service uses that would be more appropriately located elsewhere in the community.

The Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way parallels Taylor Road from Sierra College Boulevard to King Road, and then follows Rippey Road to the northerly Town boundary. Industrial land uses are located in the triangular area between Taylor Road and Swetzer Road in the northeast section of Town, some directly adjacent to residential uses. A recently-developed shopping center anchored by the Raley's grocery store is located at the northeast corner of the Horseshoe Bar Road/I-80 interchange.

Most of the Town's land area is occupied by large-lot residential/agricultural and single-family residential development. Many local landowners maintain small-scale, "hobby" agricultural activities on small ranches, including the raising of farm animals. Higher density residential development is concentrated near the Taylor Road commercial corridor.

A number of creeks run through the Town, providing visual quality, wildlife habitat, drainage, and recreational opportunities for the community. Multi-use (equestrian, bicycle and hiking) trails generally follow the riparian corridors as they meander through rural residential neighborhoods.

An Appreciation of the Past

The first inhabitants of the Loomis Basin area were indigenous tribes living in small villages along the creeks and streams. The Maidu Tribe of the Penutian Empire, the predominant tribe in the Basin, subsisted primarily on acorns from the native oaks of the region. By 1825, trappers and hunters had discovered the Basin while traveling down the river they called the "Rio de las Americanos," now known as the American River. Through the early part of the 1800s, the Basin was inhabited by only a few lone pioneers.

After the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1849, prospectors swarmed into the area and small mining camps sprang up. Between the gold rush and the organization of the County of Placer in 1851, the Basin experienced an influx of miners, farmers and businessmen. By 1850, a busy mining camp was established near the intersection of Horseshoe Bar Road and Secret Ravine. The community called itself "Pine Grove," and by 1860 had enough settlers to apply for a post office. After being told that there was already an established town in Amador County named Pine Grove, the community named its post office "Placer" in 1861. The first of many granite quarries-began operation in the nearby areas of Rocklin and Penryn in the same year.

The Central Pacific Railroad began constructing a railroad through the region about this time, and in 1864 it was extended through Placer County near Horseshoe Bar Road. The mining camp decided to move its few buildings to Loomis' present downtown site near the railroad tracks, and rename itself "Pino." However, because of its similarity to Reno, Nevada, mail, express and freight were often misdirected or misrouted; and in 1890, the community decided to change its name to "Loomis." The name derived from Jim Loomis, one of the original pioneers. Jim served in all local public offices over time, including railroad agent, express agent, postmaster, and saloon-keeper. He was not very progressive and, it is said, kept the letters and mail matter in a cigar box on the end of the saloon bar for residents to sort through themselves. As the story goes, when a United States inspector objected to this method of handling a post office for the government, Jim picked up the cigar box, mail included, and tossed it into the street!

Toward the end of the century, life in the small community began to change. A town lot sale was held; roads were extended toward the American River and the ridge on the west, and the community began to develop into a town. Stone quarries were opened near the railroad station, and local farmers began planning fruit orchards. The completion of the Central Pacific Railroad over the Sierra Nevada in 1872 established an overland route for markets in the eastern states to receive fruit cultivated by Basin farmers. By 1880, considerable acreage had been planted in fruit orchards and many of the early mining ditches were used for irrigation water. The Loomis Fruit Growers Association was established in 1901 to provide fruit packing and transport services for local fruit ranchers. A group of progressive farmers started the Bank of Loomis in 1915, and by the 1920s Loomis had become the second-largest fruit-shipping station in the County, after Newcastle.

A large fire destroyed most of the downtown business *cote* in 1915. By the early 1920s, almost every destroyed building in Loomis had been rebuilt with brick, concrete or tile, including the Town's bank, veterinary stables, fruit-shipping warehouse, butcher shop and community churches. Outside of the downtown core, large orchards of budded and grafted fruit stock still spanned the countryside.

Opportunities & Constraints

The General Plan update process has identified a number of opportunities and constraints that Loomis must address in planning for future growth: Land use and circulation patterns are shown in Figure 3-1, the Land Use Diagram (page 27). The qualities of the Town that are particularly valued by its residents are listed below, as are various constraints that may affect the Town's character and growth. The following were derived from input provided by Town residents attending the General Plan Community Workshop in June 1998, and from responses to the community preferences survey that was also conducted in 1998.

Opportunities for the Town of Loomis

- Small town atmosphere - quiet, peaceful, safe.
- The desire of residents to maintain the Town's unique character as a semi-rural community in a fast-growing metropolitan region.
- Historic structures, hitching posts and nostalgia.
- Community- events and cultural activities, including live theater.
- Friendly, family-oriented community -familiarity with neighbors.
- Proximity to Sierra College.
- Quaint, village-like, pedestrian-oriented downtown core.
- Ample inventory of vacant and underutilized sites for new land uses.
- Rural, agricultural community allowing farming, orchards, horses and livestock.
- Large rural residential parcels, and few generic residential subdivisions.
- Narrow, meandering country roads.
- Good schools.
- Accessibility to freeway (I-80) and larger metropolitan areas.
- Natural open spaces, trees, creeks and riparian corridors, providing habitat for wildlife.

Constraints and Issues facing the Town of Loomis

- Development pressure for land use intensification and build-out.
- Encroachment by adjacent urban communities.
- Development pressure for generic suburban architecture.
- Retail sales leakage from Town residents.
- Urban design and land use issues in Town gateway areas.
- Some downtown facades lack character and architectural interest.
- Lack of unified design theme in downtown core.
- Unfinished sidewalks and traffic congestion in downtown; incomplete work on providing ramps for the disabled.
- Inadequate parking for downtown core businesses to serve residents and any expanded visitor-serving use
- Traffic delays, emergency response delays, and noise created by the railroad.
- Lack of street trees and landscaping in some commercial areas.
- Some unattractive commercial signage, along I-80 and elsewhere.
- Incomplete bicycle, equestrian and pedestrian lane/trail system.

- Constraints and Issues facing the Town of Loomis**
- increasing commuter through-traffic on Sierra College Boulevard from sources outside of Loomis will require improvements to that roadway that may disrupt the tranquility and rural character of the Town, and otherwise affect the health, safety, and welfare of residents.
 - Lack of connector roadways within Town.
 - Uncertainty in revenue sources for Town services.
 - Poor condition of streets, poor roadway maintenance.
 - High traffic speeds, especially on rural residential roads.
 - inadequate park and recreation facilities and programs, as well as community center.
 - Storm flooding and drainage problems, reduced opportunities for groundwater recharge.
 - Overcrowding at local schools, and inadequate school facilities.
 - Lack of an adequate recycling program.

Population Change

Because population growth affects all types of community change, estimates of future population growth must be used as the basis for land use planning. The Sacramento Council of Governments developed population, housing and employment projections for all jurisdictions within the six counties surrounding Sacramento, including the cities in Placer County. The projections for Loomis are shown in Table 1. While the projections estimate that Loomis will grow by approximately three percent annually through the year 2020, employment is expected to grow by over eight percent annually. As with any population projections, there is also the possibility that continuing rapid economic growth in the region could cause even higher annual growth rates in Loomis.

Table 1-1 - Town of Loomis Population, Housing, and Employment Projections

Town of Loomis	1998*	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	Annual% Change
Population	6,025	6,100	6,900	8,600	9,700	10,300	3.2%
Housing Units	2,205	2,215	2,500	3,100	3,450	3,650	3.0%
Employment	-	1,550	2,000	2,700	3,450	4,150	8.4%

* California Department of Finance, City/County Estimates, 1998.

Source: Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG), Projections - Six County Area, 2000-2022.

The Future of Loomis

The community's vision for the future of Loomis is based primarily on: 1) retaining the small town aspects of its character through the revitalization of the downtown village and the expansion of family-oriented community facilities; and 2) maintaining the rural aspects of its character by continuing the pattern of progressively lower residential densities as distance increases from the downtown, thereby preserving low-intensity agricultural uses and natural open spaces. Town residents value the community's distinct identity, featuring good public services and facilities, cultural activities, and agricultural heritage. The community workshop held on June 6, 1998, identified the following components as the participants' vision for the community's future.

- The design and development of both residential and commercial parcels to reinforce the small town character, rather than tending toward the more generic urbanization found in adjacent communities.
- The preservation of the remaining open space and rural character surrounding the community, ensuring distinction between adjacent urban communities and rural Loomis.
- The preservation of agricultural activities, including the farming of orchards and raising of livestock.
- The maintenance of primarily large lot, rural residential areas, but also providing some smaller parcels for young families and seniors.
- The avoidance of gated residential communities.
- The revitalization of the downtown core with a consistent design theme, pedestrian amenities (e.g. benches, crosswalks, shade trees), facade improvements, and reuse of historical structures.
- The development of a pedestrian-oriented downtown, with small retail boutiques, restaurants and sidewalk cafes, and a Town center complex for government offices and community events.
- The development of a "transportation center" at a renovated train station and plaza at Horseshoe Bar and Taylor Road in the downtown.
- Acceleration of the rehabilitation and reuse of historical fruit sheds and older residences for retail and office space in the downtown core.
- The expansion of parking facilities and improvement of circulation patterns in the downtown core.
- The expansion of economic development and tourist activities in the downtown to increase Town revenues.
- The expansion of local theater and arts activities.
- The design of new commercial uses in "village" scale, focusing on the construction of historical facades, minimization of signage, and planting of street trees and landscaping.

- The improvement of areas considered "gateways" to the community, particularly the design and facades of areas adjacent to the Raley's shopping center.
- The creation of sustainable Town policies, focusing equally on the consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts of development.
- The preservation of meandering rural roads, and the reduction of traffic speeds in rural residential areas.
- The development of an alternate through-road for commuter traffic from Rocklin to reduce through-traffic volumes on Town roadways.
- The improvement of local street connections, better road maintenance and repair, and improved railroad grade crossings.
- Increased street trees and landscaping throughout the community;
- Cooperation with Placer County Transit to improve local and regional public transit services.
- The use of landscaping and berms along I-80 to muffle noise, rather than sound walls.
- The expansion of multi-use bicycle, equestrian and hiking trails throughout the community and surrounding open lands, and support of a trail from Loomis to Folsom Lake.
- The expansion of on-street bicycle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks in non-residential areas..
- The preservation of creek corridors, open space areas, natural features, and wildlife habitat, which in turn contributes to the retention of the rural community.
- The expansion of parks and recreation facilities, including a downtown core park and bigger swimming pool.
- The expansion of family-oriented community and recreation programs, housed within a multi-use community center.
- The improvement of the local political process through better noticing of meetings and activities, and stronger implementation measures in the General Plan.
- The expansion and modernization of local school facilities.
- The creation of a Town of Loomis Police Department, rather than contracting with the County Sheriffs Department.
- The improvement of groundwater quality through the control of septic system leakage and well pollution.