

ELEMENT II

The Role of the General Plan

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II. The Role of the General Plan

This chapter reviews the legal requirements for the General Plan, its organization, and the relationship of the local planning process in Loomis to the growth of the Sacramento region.

Legal Requirements for General Plans

Local planning is based on the concept of "police power," granted to cities and counties by the California Constitution. Police power is the authority to regulate the use of private property to promote the health, safety and welfare of the general public. The activities of land use planning, zoning, subdivision regulation, and the regulation of building and construction activities are all ways in which communities exercise their police power.

California planning laws shape the exercise of local powers by requiring each city and county to prepare and adopt a "comprehensive, long-term General Plan for the physical development of the county or city." (Government Code 65300). In some ways, the community's General Plan functions as its "constitution" for development, providing guidance for local decisions about community growth. A General Plan should express the community's goals for the future distribution and character of land uses and development, both public and private.

California law (Government Code Section 65302) requires that the General Plan include a statement of policies for each of the following topics or "elements:"

- **Land use**, designating the general distribution and intensity of land uses, including housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings, and others.
- **Circulation**, identifying the general location and nature of existing and proposed highways, arterial and collector roadways, transit terminals, and other transportation facilities.
- **Housing**, assessing the current and projected housing needs of all segments of the community and identifying land to provide adequate housing to meet such needs.
- **Open Space**, detailing techniques for preserving open space areas for natural resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, and agricultural activities.
- **Conservation**, addressing the conservation and use of natural and cultural resources, including wetlands, forests, rivers, archeological remnants, and historic structures.
- **Noise**, identifying and appraising the noise sources within the community and developing ways to mitigate such nuisances.
- **Safety**, establishing policies to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and fire hazards.

A General Plan may include additional, optional topics as necessary to address all local issues relevant to the physical development of the community. The individual elements may be consolidated and reformatted as desired as long as all seven topical areas are addressed in the General Plan.

The plan should be comprehensive, both covering the local jurisdiction's entire planning area and addressing the broad range of issues facing the community, including physical, social, aesthetic and economic concerns. The General Plan must also be internally consistent, with no policy conflicts between any of the elements. Finally, the General Plan must be a long-term document, establishing development policies to serve as the basis for day-to-day decision making within an approximate 20-year time frame.

Use of the General Plan

The General Plan is intended to provide guidance in a wide variety of important decisions by the Town's elected and appointed officials, and its staff. California law requires that all provisions of the Zoning Ordinance be consistent with the General Plan, and that no subdivision be approved unless it is consistent with the General Plan. State law also requires that all municipal decisions on capital improvements planning and budgeting be preceded by a review of their conformity with the General Plan.

The goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan will be used as criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments and rezonings, subdivisions, capital improvement programs, and other Town decisions. The General Plan will also provide the basis for other "implementing" actions by the Town, which will include the adoption of amendments to the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to bring them into consistency with the General Plan, and other specific actions that are described in the General Plan as "implementation measures." Most of the following chapters of the General Plan provide goals, policies, and implementation measures. The Housing Element also provides "objectives." The following explanation of goals, objectives, and policies is based on information provided by the *General Plan Guidelines* published by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR).

Goals are general statements of what the Town wants to accomplish, toward which the General Plan, and its policies and implementation measures are directed. Goals are general expressions of community values and, therefore, may be abstract in nature. Therefore, goals may not be quantifiable or time-dependent.

Objectives take the general direction expressed in a related goal and specify how the goal will be accomplished, both quantifiably, and within a specific time period. Objectives are found in this General Plan only in the Housing Element, because they are particularly effective in describing exactly how the community will respond to the housing mandates of State law, and the issues raised by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), in that agency's review of local Housing Elements.

Policies are specific statements that guide decision making, which indicate the Town's commitment to a particular course of action. Some policies are written as "shalls" mandatory requirements that must be complied with--and others are written as "shoulds" which express the community's preferences, and signify " ... a less rigid directive, to be honored in the absence of compelling or contravening considerations." (*General Plan Guidelines*, p.15)

Some of the policies of this General Plan also include standards. A standard is "A rule or measure establishing a level of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied. Standards define the abstract terms of goals and policies with concrete specifications." (*General Plan Guidelines*, p.16)

The goals, objectives, policies-, standards, and implementation measures of the Town of Loomis General Plan are collectively intended to assist the citizens of Loomis and their elected representatives in evolving the form and character of the community over time, to more closely match the vision for the community's future expressed in Chapter I of this plan.

Organization & Content of the Loomis General Plan

The Loomis General Plan is in two parts: a Technical Background Report, and this policy document. The background report presents detailed information on the environmental social, and economic characteristics of Loomis that are relevant to the Town's future, and which provided the basis for formulating General Plan policies. This policy document contains the "working" portions of the General Plan, to guide Town decision-makers and staff when making decisions regarding proposals for the development and use of public and private property, and the expenditure of Town funds on public facilities, services, infrastructure and other improvements. This policy document is deliberately brief, and should be used in conjunction with the background report when more detailed information about the Town is needed.

This policy document is organized into the following sections:

- **Introduction-Loomis and its Future-includes** a description of the Town of Loomis, a brief history of its settlement and development, the opportunities and constraints facing future development in the Town, and the community's vision for it's future.
- **The Role of the General Plan** - a description of the legal requirements for a General Plan, the plan's context within regional planning efforts, and the organization and content of the Town of Loomis General Plan..

The following five elements contain issues, goals and policies for all seven required topics and six optional topics.

- **Community Development Element** - includes Land Use (and the Land Use Diagram), the Downtown Plan, Community Design and Character, Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development.
- **Circulation Element** - includes goals and policies related to the community's circulation system, and the various transportation modes available to, or needed within the community.
- **Housing Element** - this is the only element of the General Plan that must be reviewed by the State (the Department of Housing and Community Development (BCD), and is subject to a specific update schedule established by State law. Therefore, the Housing Element has been reformatted to match the style of the other General Plan elements, but is not being updated at this time. Its update will follow the schedule required by the State.
- **Public Facilities and Services Element** - includes public facility, services, and municipal fiscal policies.

- **Conservation of Resources Element** - includes Natural Resources and Cultural Resources sections.
- **Public Health & Safety Element** - includes Safety and Noise sections.

Preparation of the Loomis General Plan

The fact that the Town of Loomis General Plan reflects the preferences of the community for its future is a product of the extensive participation of Loomis citizens in its preparation. The public participation program for the General Plan update has included several key components:

1. An initial "visioning" workshop where approximately 100 Loomis residents met at Del Oro School on a Saturday morning to consider the future of the community, and participate in a series of group exercises to generate ideas, issues and concerns to be considered in the update process;
2. A community preferences survey that was completed by 805 Loomis residents and business owners;
3. Extensive work by a Council-appointed General Plan Steering Committee comprised of 10 volunteer residents. The Committee met 36 times over 18 months with Town staff and the Town's consultants to review the former General Plan, update its policies where appropriate, and formulate additional proposed policies and the draft Land Use Diagram;
4. Public workshops for review of the draft plan prior to public hearings; and
5. Eleven public hearings on the draft General Plan before the Town Planning Commission and over 13 hearings before the Town Council.

Amendments to the General Plan

The California Government Code allows municipalities to amend their General Plans up to four times per year, with no limitation on the number of individual changes that may occur within each of the four times. However, given the substantial effort, thought, and care taken by the community in the preparation of this comprehensive General Plan update, the Town intends to diligently carry out the plan as adopted, and not frequently consider changes to its policies and property designations. Instead, the Town intends that the General Plan undergo a thorough periodic review, including consideration of changes to individual property designations, at least once every five years. The following policies apply to the Town's consideration of amendments proposed by private parties.

Policies on General Plan Amendments

1. It is the policy of the Town to not consider subsequent individual property amendment requests outside of the periodic review of the entire plan; unless the proposed amendments clearly offer community-wide public benefits.
2. Individual property General Plan amendments that are requested at times other than during a periodic review by the Town will be considered at a Council meeting prior to formal Town

review (i.e., environmental determination, complete staff review with the preparation of a staff report and recommendation, and public hearings before the Commission and Council). The purpose of this initial review will be for the Council to determine whether the proposed amendment complies with Policy 1 above, and whether the Council wishes to initiate the processing of the amendment.

3. If an individual property amendment request is approved by the Council for processing, the public notice for hearings before the Planning Commission and Town Council to consider the amendments will be mailed to all Town property owners, at the expense of the applicant.

Long-Term Growth

The provisions of this General Plan addressing growth and change are focused on the area within the current corporate boundary of the Town, and do not provide for any expansion beyond that boundary. This approach was followed for two reasons: the population and business growth projected for Loomis over the term of this plan can be accommodated through the additional subdivision, residential and non-residential development anticipated by this plan within the present incorporated area; and the Town's current Sphere of Influence established by the Placer County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) is coterminous with the current Town boundary.

The Town's Sphere of Influence is a key component of future growth decisions. California law provides that a city may not annex property unless it is included within the municipality's Sphere of Influence. It is the responsibility of the Local Agency Formation Commission to establish a sphere for each incorporated community and special district within its county, based on input from each. The Sphere of Influence is intended to identify areas where a city definitively plans to annex property for growth within a 10- to 20-year time frame, and where the city has (or will have) the capacity to provide all necessary public services, infrastructure, and other public facilities as growth extends into the area of the sphere.

Given the need to complete this General Plan update within a reasonable time, and the additional time and effort that would be required for the analysis necessary to justify a change in the Town's sphere to the Local Agency Formation Commission, the Town has decided to explore the desirability of a Sphere of Influence expansion through a separate study after the completion of this General Plan update.

Implementation Measures

1. Within two years, or as soon as possible after the adoption of this General Plan, the Town will prepare a Sphere of Influence Study in compliance with LAFCO requirements, to evaluate areas surrounding the community that may be appropriate for annexation, and will amend the General Plan to provide land use designations, and policies for public facilities, services, and infrastructure as necessary to reflect the Town's new Sphere of Influence and desired growth pattern.

Regional Coordination,

As a community grows within its larger region, local changes have a greater potential over time to affect other communities and the region as a whole. Therefore, each jurisdiction carries a responsibility to coordinate its General Plan with regional planning efforts. The General Plan must be coordinated with other local government agencies to ensure consistent planning decisions, as well as the attainment of regional circulation, environmental and housing goals. The General Plan must also coordinate with special districts providing public services to community residents to ensure the effective and efficient provision of such services based on similar development and population projections. The regional agencies whose planning policies may affect the Town of Loomis are shown in Table 2, and in Figure 2-1.

Among the many separate tasks required to complete this General Plan were the review of the General Plans of neighboring jurisdictions, particularly including the City of Rocklin, and Placer County. The Town of Loomis is committed to coordinating and working with the other jurisdictions in the region to address the many planning issues that cross political boundaries to affect cities, citizens, infrastructure, and environmental resources.

Table 2-1 – Regional Planning Considerations

Agency	Planning Responsibilities
Loomis Fire Protection District	Locate fire protection facilities and provide emergency medical, fire suppression and protection services as needed to serve developed and undeveloped areas.
Loomis Union School District	Plan for and provide school facilities as needed to accommodate population growth.
Penryn Fire District	Locate fire protection facilities and provide emergency medical, fire suppression and protection services as needed to serve developed and undeveloped areas.
Penryn School District	Plan for and provide school facilities as needed to accommodate population growth.
Placer County Air Pollution Control District	Responsible for reducing and maintaining regional air pollution levels to within federal and state standards; prepares the Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP - federal) and Air Quality Attainment Plan (AQAP - state).
Placer County Environmental Health Division	Responsible for the treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes, as well as the siting and management of hazardous waste facilities; prepares the Placer County Hazardous Waste Management Plan; reviews and approves wells and on-site sewage disposal systems.
Placer County Flood Control and Water Conservation District	Responsible for the conservation and development of water resources, and control and management of drainage, storm, flood and other waters; prepares the Dry Creek Watershed Flood Control Plan, Stormwater Management Plan, and Placer County Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan.
Placer County Open Space Implementation Project	Responsible for developing economically-viable implementation programs to enable Placer County to preserve natural resources and habitats; prepares the Natural Communities Conservation Plan.
Placer County Solid Waste Division	Responsible for solid waste reduction and collection, as well as the siting and management of solid waste facilities in Placer County; prepares the Placer County Integrated Waste Management Plan.
Placer County Transportation Planning Agency	Responsible for the planning of a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation system in the Placer County region; prepares the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
Placer County Water Agency	Responsible for the treatment, storage and distribution of potable water supplies in Placer County; prepares the Treated Water Supply Master Plan.
Placer Union High School District	Plan for and provide school facilities as needed to accommodate population growth.

Agency	Planning Responsibilities
Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG)	Advisory agency on issues of inter-jurisdictional concern in El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties; serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for member counties; primarily addresses issues relating to land use, circulation and air quality; prepares the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
Sierra Economic Development District (SEDD) and Sierra Planning Organization (SPO)	Regional advisory agency on issues of inter-jurisdictional concern in the Sierra Nevada region; provides regional demographic and economic information, and mandated housing allocations; prepares the Overall Economic Development Plan.
South Placer County Fire District	Locate fire protection facilities and provide emergency medical, fire suppression and protection services as needed to serve developed and undeveloped areas.
South Placer Municipal Utility District (SPMUD)	Responsible for sewer collection services to Loomis, Rocklin and Dry Creek Basin; prepares the SPMUD Sewer Master Plan and participates in the preparation of the Roseville Regional Wastewater Treatment Service Area Master Plan.

Source: Town of Loomis, General Plan Update Technical Background Report -August 1998.

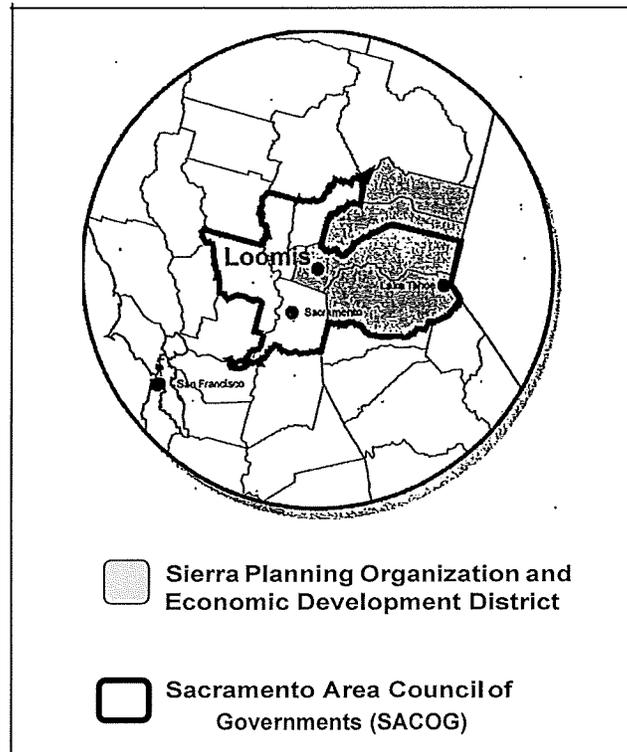


Figure 2-1 - Regional Planning Agencies