
TOWN OF LOOMIS GENERAL PLAN

THE ART OF WRITING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES



WRITING GOALS

» A goal is a general direction-setter. It is an **ideal future end** related to the public health, safety, or general welfare. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, **may be abstract** in nature. Consequently, a goal is generally **not quantifiable or time dependent**.

» Example Goals:

- Quiet residential streets
- A diversified economic base for the town
- An aesthetically pleasing community
- A safe community



WRITING OBJECTIVES

- » An objective is a **specified end, condition, or state** that is an intermediate step toward attaining a goal. It should be achievable and, when possible, measurable and time-specific. There may be more than one objective for each goal.
- » Example objectives:
 - A 25 percent increase in downtown office space by 2030
 - A reduction in stormwater runoff from streets and parking lots
 - Create x miles of trails



WRITING OBJECTIVES

- » Many contemporary plans **do not** include “objectives”
- » The terms “goal” and “objective” are used interchangeably in some general plans, many plans differentiate between broad, unquantifiable goals and specific objectives.
- » Either approach is allowable, as flexibility is a characteristic of the general plan.



WRITING POLICIES

- » A policy is a specific statement that guides decision-making. It indicates a **commitment** of the local legislative body to a **particular course of action**.
- » Example Policies:
 - **Require** that buildings commercial areas accommodate uses that are located and designed to promote pedestrian activity.
 - **Require** that the timing of new development will be correlated with the provision of adequate supporting infrastructure.
 - **Limit** the amount of on-site parking provided by any new use within 1,000' of the transit station to promote increased ridership and reduce costs for housing.
 - **Maintain and expand** agricultural uses.
- » Avoid policies that function as actions or implementation tools—for example, “amend the development code to reflect environmental justice...”



WRITING 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 objectives and policies with concrete specifications.
- » **Note:** Standards are only used for limited applications, such as land use density (units per acre) and intensity (floor area ratio) and noise/land use compatibility--both of which are required by statute to be addressed in general plans.
- » Most standards most appropriately belong in the zoning or other implementing ordinances, such as required or minimum parking spaces.



WRITING IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

- » An implementation measure is an action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out general plan policy.
- » Examples of implementation measures:
 - Adopt a specific plan for the industrial park
 - Amend the zoning ordinance to place areas designated by the land use element for agriculture in the agricultural zone
- » While OPR guidelines suggest that every policy be coordinated with at least one implementation program, many policies are implemented through current policies, ordinances, and policies that do not need to be repeated in the general plan.
- » Many implementation programs apply to multiple policies, for example: “amend the zoning ordinance to (a) accommodate mixed-use development and (b) restrict development of agricultural lands.

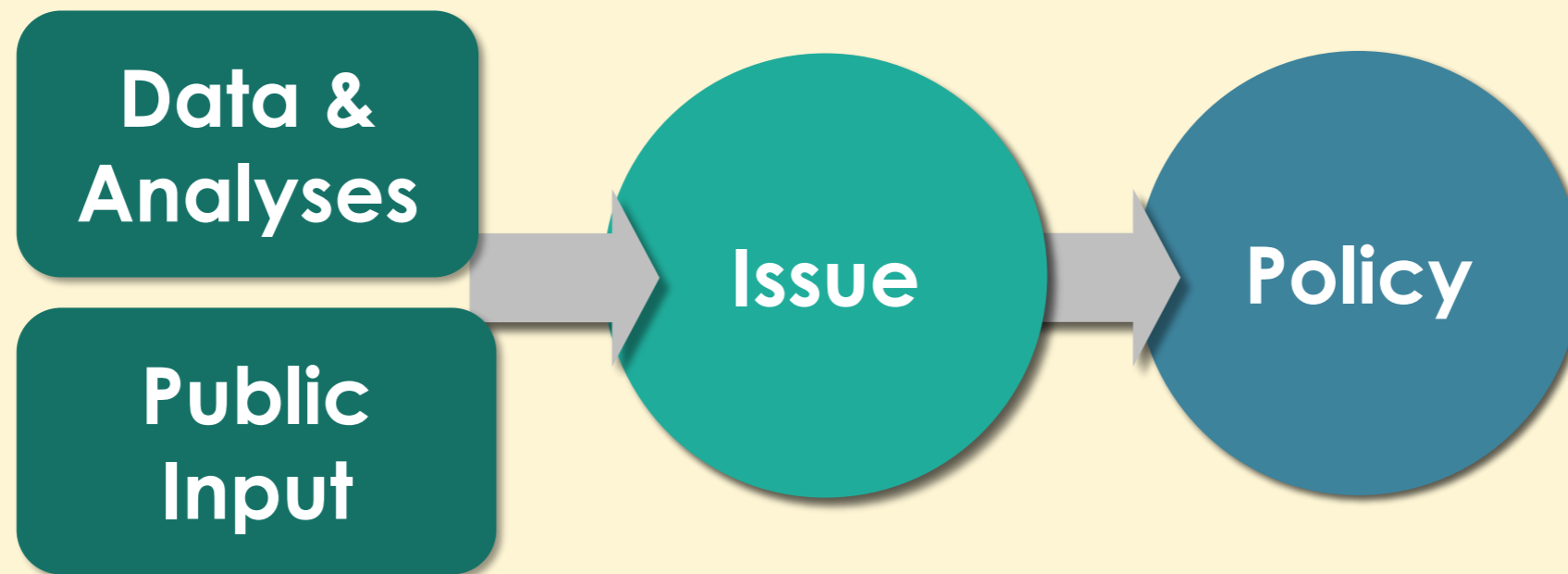


POLICY DEVELOPMENT

What is the process for developing policies?



POLICY DEVELOPMENT



DEFINING THE ISSUE

» Strengths

- Community character and identify
- Strong economy
- Quality residential neighborhoods
- Attractive environmental setting

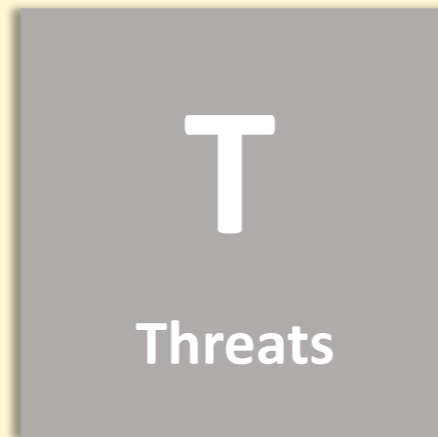


» Weaknesses

- Traffic congestion
- Lack of affordable housing
- Jobs/housing imbalance
- Insufficient infrastructure to support infill development
- Lack of streetscape amenities in community core

» Opportunities

- Presence of transit
- Vacant properties
- Underutilized properties potential for infill
- Strong demand for housing



» Threats

- Homelessness
- Loss of habitat and agriculture
- Flood zones
- Earthquake faults
- Climate change
- Changing retail economy
- Gentrification



METRICS FOR GOOD POLICIES

» **Eight Step Checklist:**

1. Are they understandable?
2. Would multiple readers reach the same conclusion regarding their application?
3. Do they accurately reflect the community's character, values, issues, and setting?
4. Do they fully respond to the issues that have been defined; are they complete?
5. Are they feasible?
6. Do they reflect local political realities?
7. Do they reflect current legislation?
8. Do they reflect best practices?



POLICY DEVELOPMENT



How should policies be written?



POLICY LANGUAGE

Policies Provide Direction for Implementation

The General Plan is the town’s “constitution” and all policies address actions that are carried out by the town...not a school district, not CalTrans, nor other regional, state, or federal agency or private organizations. Policies must distinguish this role.

Consequently, all policies ‘begin’ with “The Town shall...” which may be inferred parenthetically rather than repeated for every general plan policy.



POLICY LANGUAGE

Policies Provide Direction for the Town's Implementation

Examples

- » *(The Town shall work)* Work with and support the School District's development of new schools to support the town's projected growth (Note: the town does not build schools)
- » *(The Town shall)* Require developers to provide affordable housing in all projects exceeding 25 units (Note: the town creates capacity and provides incentives, but does not build housing, except in specified exceptions)



POLICY LANGUAGE

Mandatory versus Permissive Intent

For a policy to be useful as a guide to action it must be **clear and unambiguous**.

Adopting broadly drawn and vague policies is poor practice. Clear policies are particularly important when it comes to judging whether zoning decisions, subdivisions, public works projects, etc., are consistent with the general plan.

When writing policies, be aware of the difference between “shall” and “should.” “Shall” indicates an unequivocal directive. “Should” signifies a less rigid directive, to be honored in the absence of compelling or contravening considerations. **Use of the word “should” to give the impression of more commitment than actually intended is a common but unacceptable practice.** It is better to adopt no policy than to adopt a policy with no backbone.



POLICY LANGUAGE

Element Content – Example

» Goal

Attractive and pedestrian-oriented commercial street frontages

» Policy 1

(The Town shall) Require developers to locate buildings along public sidewalks and design street-facing elevations to promote pedestrian activity

» Implementation Programs

(The Town shall) Amend the zoning ordinance to require a build-to line of 0 – 10' maximum from the property frontage and 70 percent of building elevations to be visually transparent or used for entryways



POLICY LANGUAGE

Element Content – Example

» Goal

Attractive & pedestrian-oriented commercial street frontages

» Policy 2

(The Town shall) Plant street trees in a continuous canopy along commercial streets where they currently do not exist

» Implementation Programs

(The Town shall) Annually fund a minimum of \$150,000 for the planting of streets, as resources are available



QUESTIONS?

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