



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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DATE: December 21, 1992

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Planning Department

SUBJECT: Town Council Approved General Plan Vision Statement

Attached is the Vision Statement developed by the General Plan Advisory Committee, as reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and the Town Council.

The GPAC held several meetings to discuss the issues facing Mammoth Lakes. They considered the responses to the Town Vision Forum questionnaire, input from the public at the Vision Forum, and the Vision Forum Workshops run by the Center for Settlement Services.

The Vision Statement will guide the establishment of goals and policies during the General Plan Update process. Continued public involvement and review will be essential to successful completion of this process.

All questions and comments should be directed to the Planning Department at 934-8983.

GENERAL PLAN GOALS

Mammoth Lakes is a community set in the high mountains of the Eastern Sierra in rural Mono County. With forests, lakes, streams, clean air, and sweeping vistas, the region is a haven for fish and wildlife. The Town is home for many who find a unique, stable small town atmosphere desirable. It also hosts visitors who come to enjoy the surrounding beauty and recreational opportunities.

The General Plan represents the values of the community. It is a statement of long-range public policy which guides the use of private and public lands within a community's boundaries. The policies within the plan are intended to become the basis for decisions by elected and appointed officials. By this means, the values reflected in the General Plan policies shape the community and the quality of life sought by its residents.

The following overall goals direct the growth and enhancement of the community of Mammoth Lakes.

OVERALL GOALS

1. A desirable place to live and visit.
2. A healthy natural environment.
3. A high quality, full-service recreation resort and community available to all economic sectors.
4. A vital year-round economy.
5. Housing, employment, cultural, public facilities and services for all segments of the community.
6. A comprehensive circulation system de-emphasizing the automobile and promoting pedestrian, bicycling and transit options.
7. A consistent, attractive appearance and image which reflects the town's Alpine setting.

THE VISION OF MAMMOTH LAKES

The following narrative describes what Mammoth Lakes hopes to become in the next 20 years. It reflects the values of the community at this point in time and translates them into the future, serving as a guide to achieve the quality of life desired for Mammoth Lakes.

The Town of Mammoth Lakes is located in the majestic Eastern Sierra in a high mountain valley at the base of Mammoth Mountain and the Sherwin Ridge. Its meadows, creeks, mountain

vistas, surrounding forests and wildlife have made the town a unique, high quality destination resort community with year-round recreational opportunities. The town has grown gracefully into the environment, respecting the resources and setting which gave rise to its existence.

Visitors come year-round to enjoy the fishing, skiing, hiking, camping and other outstanding recreational opportunities. The focus of town is along Main street and Old Mammoth Road and is the town center with quaint shops and restaurants, pedestrian promenades, the visitor's center and courtyards. Four major resort and recreation activity centers are available featuring a full range of hotel accommodations, conference facilities, golf, art festivals, athletic clubs, shopping and eating establishments, bicycling, strolling and other outdoor activities. Each resort has its own individual character reflecting the area within which it is located. Camping and other rustic accommodations are available for the outdoorsman.

Visitor population is fairly stable during the year reaching a maximum population on weekends and during any holiday period. Visitors stay for an extended period to enjoy the recreational and cultural pursuits available in Mammoth Lakes. They come by car or air, but local transportation services allow them to conveniently get to all areas of town without the need for their personal vehicles.

Residents of Mammoth Lakes appreciate the natural wonder of the area. But they make their homes and raise their families here because of the cohesive small town atmosphere and the opportunities for quality education, recreation and social interaction.

Overall, the town boasts a clean and safe, family oriented community. Residents are primarily employed in private and public service industries catering, directly or indirectly, to visitors' accommodation and recreation needs. Families comprise the majority of the population with support from seasonal residents who come to enjoy second homes or work part-time in the recreation industries. The environment and services are what attract residents to Mammoth Lakes. Ample employment opportunities are available during all seasons.

The people of Mammoth Lakes have great pride in how the community has developed. The community retains a delineation between developed and undeveloped lands. Development is restricted to the private lands with expansion occurring only in the South Gateway area to accommodate educational and public facilities. Clearly defined residential areas, neighborhood parks, the downtown area, full-service hotels, cultural and theater arts and outstanding recreational experiences have brought Mammoth Lakes into the forefront of destination resorts.

Mountain vistas, viewsheds, clean air, native trees and vegetation have all been protected from intrusive development. Building and landscaping aesthetics conform to standards which include common design elements. Natural elements are noticeable in all forms of development. Neighborhoods are developed according to standards which meet the needs of all segments of the community. A variety of housing types are available throughout town. Businesses are typically small and retain individualized, quaint characteristics. Transportation networks link public transit with pedestrian and trail systems to discourage automobile use and promote the small-town atmosphere.

Economic Vitality

Recreation and visitor services are the mainstay of the economy. New businesses are primarily recreation and resort oriented. Cottage industries, education and non-tourist dependent businesses have created other year-round employment. Commercial and industrial development has occurred commensurate with the population which can support such business ventures. Opportunities to make a sustainable living are numerous. Residents are able to obtain job skills through local employment and training opportunities. Opportunity for business growth and expansion are available through support from the Chamber of Commerce and the Town.

Recreation

Mammoth Lakes is the hub of recreational opportunities in the Eastern Sierra. Along with the diverse experiences available within the Town, Mono County is the gateway to the east entrance to Yosemite National Park. The Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses abut the Town. Fishing and hiking in the June Lake, Crowley Lake and Owens River areas are close by and the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, Bodie Ghost Town, Mono Lake and other regional recreational attractions are within an easy day's drive.

Recreation is the engine which powers the Mammoth Lakes area economy. Promotion of recreation activities which offer greater economic stability to the town has been achieved. In recognizing the need for better recreation options, Mammoth Lakes also recognizes that further development must be in keeping with our setting, natural resources and economic means. An emphasis on the quality of each experience and how it effects the capacity of the natural environment are carefully evaluated.

Mammoth Mountain Ski Area is one of the best ski experiences anywhere. The ski area has expanded to a capacity of 24,000 skiers which are served from five base lodges. Access has been improved so that skiers may reach the runs from an in-town gondola or from public transportation which delivers

people to any one of the five base facilities quickly and economically from anywhere in town.

Sherwin/Snowcreek Ski Area is located on the south side of town. It serves up to 8,000 skiers from a base lodge within the Snowcreek Resort. While it is primarily a ski area, the Snowcreek Resort provides golfing, tennis, ice skating, and other recreational pursuits.

The Lakes Basin is a heavily used fishing and Nordic skiing area. Camping, hiking, climbing and boating are all experiences pursued by avid and first-time outdoor enthusiasts. Through a sustained fishing enhancement program and special events, Mammoth Lakes has become a premier trophy trout area.

Throughout the community there are both public and private recreational facilities. Gymnasiums, tennis courts, swimming pools, softball and soccer fields and other community oriented recreation opportunities are plentiful.

Resorts

Mammoth Lakes has provided the visitor with a selection of four full-service resorts, each with its own identity and character, in addition to Mammoth Mountain's accommodations and services. North Village, Lodestar, Juniper Ridge and Snowcreek provide for over 4000 hotel rooms combined. Housing and shopping opportunities, as well as numerous amenities are available in each resort making it convenient for visitors, employees and residents to enjoy their stay without the need for services beyond the resort. Easy pedestrian access among all facilities and amenities in the resort make each resort an attraction unto itself. The architecture and sense of scale are different in each resort to reflect the surroundings of the immediate area.

North Village is a bustling, tightly-knit pedestrian oriented resort located in the vicinity of Main Street and Minaret Road. It contains large luxurious hotels as well as smaller moderate priced hotels and inns. There are many restaurants and shops oriented around a central plaza. Community and cultural activities are planned throughout the year on the plaza and in the meeting halls. The gondola to Mammoth Mountain leaves from the plaza area making North Village a premier winter destination. Parking is understructure and public transportation serves the resort and surrounding neighborhoods. Housing is provided on-site for those people wishing to reside close to work and play.

Lodestar is a true four-season resort. Two full-service hotels, condominiums, single-family housing and shopping areas front onto lakes and a golf course in the center of town. Tall trees frame the lakes and hotels offering a secluded

outdoor experience. Again, the car is subordinate to the pedestrian. Golfing, ice-skating, hiking, bicycling, tennis, swimming, strolling and cross country skiing are activities enjoyed at Lodestar. Commercial establishments are sufficient to serve Lodestar and are not community oriented. Conference facilities provide strong activity in the Fall and Spring.

Juniper Ridge is located at the base of Chair 15 and has one of the most spectacular settings in town. Because it is within such a prominent viewshed, its presence is more subdued with architecture and scale which blends into the surroundings. A large hotel and small supporting shops are the mainstay of this resort. Some amenities are available, including ski-in/ski-out accommodations. Housing is available on-site for renters and owner occupants. Juniper Ridge is a major skier destination, served by the public transit system, due to the upgraded lift and base lodge facilities.

Snowcreek Resort offers a variety of recreational experiences. Skiing, golfing, ice-skating, swimming, bicycling, hiking, tennis, and fishing are available at Snowcreek. Full-service hotels, an athletic club, conference facilities, inns, shopping centers and restaurants, are found at the base of the Sherwin Mountains in a "village" setting. Condominiums and single family homes abut the golf course and the National Forest. Meadows and creeks are preserved and walking or bicycling through the village is commonplace. Most travel outside of the resort is unnecessary because all services and amenities are provided.

Mammoth Mountain has its own high quality accommodations and recreational experiences to offer. The Mammoth Mountain Inn and associated restaurants, the Main Lodge for the ski area, access to the Mountain Bike Park and Minaret Vista/Devil's Postpile are the amenities offered from this resort. Located on US Forest Service administered land 5 miles from Town, it has the unique setting of being surrounded by forests and lakes; yet is close enough to Town to take advantage of the experiences offered in the community.

Downtown - Entrance to Town

In addition to the resorts, Downtown Mammoth Lakes is an equally important commercial district. As the entrance to Town, it is the focus of Town activities. Two distinct shopping districts form the "town center". One encompasses a 4 block area primarily on the south side of Main Street and caters to tourist activities focusing around a visitor's center. Small shops, restaurants, cafes and courtyards front along the pedestrian promenade. People enjoy the "town center" because of the variety of plazas and gathering places available to meet friends and experience the small town atmosphere. Design of buildings and landscaping is compatible

forming an identifiable town center. Public parking is available, but separated from the pedestrian experience. Connection to the commercial uses on the north side of Main Street is safe and convenient. The town's transit routes connect here so access is available to and from all parts of town. Motels, small chalets and residences surround the "town center".

The other commercial district is located around the intersection of Meridian Blvd. and Old Mammoth Road. It contains more service oriented businesses for residents and visitors. Offices, grocery stores, clothing stores, restaurants, theaters and small businesses are found here. The schools and hospital are nearby. This area forms the nucleus of Mammoth Lakes' residents daily lives. While also emphasizing pedestrian circulation, transit serves the district and public and private parking is available near every business. Community activities are frequently held here because of the constant flow of people who come to take care of local needs. Shopping centers have been upgraded with new facades and landscaping. Lodging and residential areas are located between and around the downtown shopping areas, providing housing and accommodations near transit facilities and commercial services.

Industry

Industrial uses have been relocated from the commercial districts to the Industrial/Business Park at the east end of town. Cottage industries relating to the recreation uses in the area are located here as well as construction-related and heavy commercial uses. Some screening of uses is evident, but design standards are minimal to encourage the more intense uses to locate in the industrial park.

Gateways

There are two gateways into Town. Until one reaches town from Highway 395 there is only the natural landscape to enjoy. Continuing up Highway 203, the gateway to Town is marked by the USFS Visitor's Center and campground, inviting landscaping and lighting, medians separating east and westbound travel lanes in the highway, pathways for bicycling and walking and the Town Center with its "quaint" and cohesive shops and restaurants fronting along the many plazas and walkways.

Entering Town from the Meridian Blvd./Highway 203 intersection, one travels along a boulevard which passes by the educational facilities and supporting recreational uses on the way into the commercial business district. The Industrial/Business park is well screened from view and a

single family subdivision abuts the elementary school and high school.

Residential Neighborhoods

Three types of housing are prevalent in Mammoth Lakes. Single family homes, apartments and condominiums provide a variety of housing types for families and residents of all income levels in all neighborhoods. High density neighborhoods are concentrated around activity areas and commercial centers. When viewshed considerations are minimal, even higher density accommodations can be found near commercial and activity centers. Lower density, single-family neighborhoods are developed at the periphery of the town.

All residential developments have tried to protect steeper slopes and natural vegetation. Design and site planning techniques promote the preservation of open space and limit the amount of impervious surfaces. Development standards limit mass, guide development on ridges, bluffs and hillsides, and encourage building materials which complement the surrounding natural environment.

The Old Mammoth area has a character all its own. Development is more rural in nature and densities are lower. Properties along Mammoth Creek and the Bluffs have been especially attentive to design and site planning to protect the viewshed within which they are located. Some dirt roads have now been paved to reduce erosion into Mammoth Creek, but impervious surfaces have been discouraged through lot coverage, common driveways and density requirements.

Condominiums are abundant but have been de-emphasized over the last several years in favor of higher density rental/apartment development which better meets the needs of resident income groups. Most of the remaining condominiums serve visitors and second-homeowners who wish to enjoy a more relaxed stay in Mammoth Lakes. Older condominiums have been refurbished improving community aesthetics and the overall housing stock.

Low income housing and employee housing developments are located throughout town. All sizes and styles of units have been developed to meet the needs of families, singles and unrelated households. The resorts have provided much of their own housing on-site to accommodate the employees and families which they generate. Likewise, affordable housing has been developed in the center of town to take advantage of the proximity to services, employment and transit. Single-room-occupancies and small apartments have been built within commercial developments downtown and in the resorts to bring people closer to their place of employment and provide some vitality to the districts.

Development Characteristics

Development has occurred over the years commensurate with available resources and market demand. Comprehensive water, energy and environmental policies enable development to occur within the carrying capacity of our resources, with careful attention to retaining a high quality of life for residents and visitors. Levels of service for fire, police and health care remain high in conjunction with continued growth.

The resorts have progressed only when the market conditions and financing dictate and when water, transportation, drainage and other community services are in place or are developed concurrent with each resort development. Residential development has kept pace with resort development. No faction of the community has been forced to sacrifice to allow another element to proceed.

The town has a consistent image and character reflecting the Alpine and historic setting. New developments have been designed using the vernacular of the immediate surroundings. Likewise, older developments have been renovated to form a cohesive design throughout the commercial districts.

Environment

The environment surrounding Mammoth Lakes is the dominant feature in all public policy and development issues. Not only does the environment provide the resources for our recreation and tourism based economy, it places constraints on development through weather, available private lands and the carrying capacity of the air, water, and wildlife resources.

The Alpine character of Mammoth Lakes has been retained by protecting environmentally and visually sensitive areas from urbanization. Compact development has occurred leaving the National Forest as the backdrop to the community. Open space has been preserved in areas of wetlands, streams and significant slopes and rock outcroppings within and outside the developed area of town. Stands of trees remain allowing the Forest to penetrate into the community. Vistas have been maintained and buildings are subdued in deference to the landscape.

Fish and wildlife share the resources with the community. Water resources have been protected by using primarily groundwater for public use, leaving surface waters for recreation and wildlife.

Conservation has been the norm in construction techniques and in domestic habits. Newfound geothermal resources have been used efficiently for heating and recreational purposes.

Landscaping has taken many forms. Drought tolerant, native or adaptive species are most abundant, accented by small lawns and flower or vegetable gardens. All properties have either retained the natural landscaping or have revegetated to form a cohesive appearance. Erosion control and a high mountain image have benefited from the landscaping efforts of the community.

Restrictions on the use of natural resources are commensurate with community values. Tree management has preserved many healthy trees within private developments. New, native trees have been planted, where appropriate, promising a healthy forest for the future. The community's acceptance of water conserving devices and drought tolerant and native vegetation has reduced the need for water use restrictions.

Transportation

Traffic flow in the community is variable based upon visitor arrival and departure hours. Main Street, Old Mammoth Road, Meridian Blvd. and Minaret Road carry the most vehicle traffic in-town because all neighborhoods, resorts and commercial districts are accessed from these streets. However, once visitors and residents reach their destination automobile travel is subordinate to transit, pedestrian or cycling.

A comprehensive transportation system has been established creating a more pedestrian and transit oriented community which minimizes auto usage. The coordinated system includes bus transportation, strategically located parking facilities, reliable air transportation, interconnecting paths and bikeways and improved sidewalks. Expansion of arterial, collector and local roadways has been discouraged and is only accomplished when other modes of transportation are not capable of serving the community in a convenient and reliable manner.

Travel is improved to major destination areas, including the ski areas, businesses districts, schools, resorts and neighborhoods as well as to the Lakes Basin and Devil's Postpile area. Visitors and residents find that private automobile use is unnecessary in most cases.

The airport has been expanded to provide convenient and reliable air service from major market areas. Terminal and runway improvements have made Mammoth Lakes a featured destination for world-wide travelers. Convenient and economical shuttle service delivers visitors to their selected accommodations.

Public Facilities

The Town has continued to expand recreation and educational facilities, commensurate with growth and based upon the resources of the natural environment. New educational facilities have been developed with gymnasiums, learning facilities and recreation amenities available for community use in the South Gateway. Neighborhood parks with easy pedestrian access have been established to compliment the community parks. Networks of trails connect most parks, neighborhoods, and commercial/employment centers.

A recycling center has been provided to meet the needs of the community. Convenient government service is available to citizens.

A variety of art and cultural facilities is available. The indoor/outdoor theater is heavily used for all types of events. Education of and respect for the natural environment is promoted through interpretive exhibits, nature trails, stream viewing chambers, and other public facilities.

Ice skating, golfing, swimming and outdoor activities of all types are available, whether provided by the private sector through dedications or by the public sector through available financing alternatives.