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Appendix A: Background Report

Sierra Valley Neighborhood District Planning Study
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Executive Summary

A. Introduction

The Sierra Valley Neighborhood District Planning Study (SVNDP) summarizes the results of the District Planning process for the Sierra Valley Neighborhood. Through a listening process that actively involved local residents, the study considered key issues, likes and dislikes, and used this input to develop recommendations that address identified issues and concerns.

The SVNDP study is different from other district planning efforts in that it focuses on an established residential neighborhood, where significant land use and other physical changes are not expected or desirable. The neighborhood is unique in the mix and character of its housing and its residents, who are primarily members of the Town's year-round population and its workforce. Many of the issues faced by Sierra Valley's residents center around daily quality of life, safety, and neighborhood character: the recommendations of this study focus on strategies to improve those existing conditions, and to make the neighborhood better for all of its residents.

B. Study Process

The SVNDP Process included four major steps, which were similar to those followed for other NDP's. They included:

1. Framework, including identification of the study area boundary, guiding principles and initial issues.
2. Existing Issues, Opportunities and Constraints.
3. Develop and Review Alternatives.
4. Select Preferred Alternative.

The NDP process was initiated in February 2011, with a public workshop and listening session to identify issues, followed by review and approval of the Framework that considered study boundaries, guiding principles, and preliminary issues for each area. The Framework includes:

- The "study area" reflects the primary area of interest for the study and its main focus; the "sphere of influence" includes surrounding

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areas that may share issues with, affect, or be affected by the primary study area.

- Guiding Principles were drawn from the character descriptions and other information outlined in the General Plan and relevant planning documents.
- Key Issues were based on a review of existing conditions, previous NDP studies and other relevant information.

Following the Planning Commission and Town Council review of the Framework, which took place in March and April 2011, public workshops were held in late April to review existing conditions and issues, and to discuss ideas and options for the study area.

There were a diversity of issues raised throughout the process, but most focused on items that affect the day-to-day quality of life and experience of living in Sierra Valley. As the process evolved, a consensus began to develop around some key ideas: that residents valued the fundamental character and positive qualities of the neighborhood, and felt these should be protected as much as possible; and that large-scale physical changes and improvements weren't felt to be necessary or desirable.

C. Existing Conditions, Issues, Opportunities and Constraints

Existing Conditions, issues, opportunities and constraints for each district are presented in detail in the Background Report in Appendix A. Key issues for Sierra Valley included:

- Land Use, Housing and Density, particularly issues of neighborhood character, problems caused by a perceived "over-densification" of the neighborhood and an over-concentration of affordable housing. The existing and future density of residential development is seen as a cause of many of the neighborhood's issues, and residents are concerned that projects are adequately planned to avoid parking and snow storage impacts to neighboring properties.
- Mobility, including issues of traffic (speeding and cut-through traffic), pedestrian safety, and lack of connectivity within, to and from Sierra Valley, and snow management.
- Infrastructure, focusing on the adequacy of storm drainage and past episodes of flooding.

- Nuisance, public safety and code enforcement, such as illegal dumping, property maintenance, lighting and building code violations.

D. Alternatives

The Background Report also describes the alternatives and options discussed for the SVNDP. Because of the scope and type of issues, there was not a substantial range of options possible or appropriate to consider, however, a number of ideas were presented at the public workshops and are outlined in the Background Report.

E. Preferred Concept and Recommendations

Chapter 2 of the SVNDP Study provides a description of the concept preferred and related recommendations. Recommendations focus on the issue areas above, and reflect a range of programs, management strategies and physical improvements to address them. Some of the recommendations of the NDP are:

- Improved code enforcement by the Town, including dedication of additional staff to identifying and resolving code compliance issues.
- Traffic calming through signage, striping and other “low impact solutions.”
- Exploring options for new trail connections.
- Strategies to encourage neighborhood investment, such as creating a low-interest loan program for improvements, and encouraging home ownership in Sierra Valley.
- Encouraging additional community involvement and sense of neighborhood pride through organized groups, events, and outreach.
- Working with Mammoth Lakes Housing and through policy development to achieve greater dispersal of affordable housing units throughout the town, rather than concentrating those units in Sierra Valley.
- Improved storm drain maintenance.
- Improved snow management.

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F. Conclusions

Completion of the SVNDP Process resolves district planning for an important “locals” neighborhood that has not been the subject of focused planning or substantial investment in the past. A number of issue areas, like storm drainage and traffic are likely to require additional study to determine the scope and cost of potential improvements, and to identify the most appropriate solutions. The concepts and recommendations of this report identify a range of feasible solutions which, although not requiring substantial physical or new infrastructure, will nonetheless require investment of staff, community and other resources to be successfully implemented. Fostering and building a sense of neighborhood pride and a desire for residents to invest in the community will be an important component of bringing about improvement in Sierra Valley, as will partnership between the Town, Police Department, Fire District, Mammoth Lakes Housing, and community members.

Chapter 1. NDP Background and Process

A. Introduction

The goal of the Sierra Valley NDP (SVNDP) is to develop directed and strategic planning and policy recommendations for the Sierra Valley neighborhood, one of the town's core residential districts. Figure 1 in the Background Report shows the boundaries of the study area. It includes all of the properties along Manzanita Road, Mono Street, Lupin Street, Joaquin Road and Callahan Way between Main Street and Meridian Boulevard, as well as properties along Arrowhead Drive and Chaparral Road.

The Sierra Valley NDP followed a similar process to previous district planning, with a Framework review by the Planning Commission and Town Council, and public workshops to review existing conditions, issues, and proposed concepts for the districts. In contrast to other district planning efforts, the SVNDP did not convene a focus group: as a residential neighborhood, local residents and the broader community were seen as the most important source of information to guide the planning process.

Overall, the recommendations for Sierra Valley focus on two major themes: preserving quality of life and positive aspects of neighborhood character, and improving level of service, programs and initiatives to address known issues. In general, solutions requiring substantial physical changes or new infrastructure were not supported by residents, who wished to see more "low impact" changes and improvements.

B. District Planning

District Planning is a concept defined in the General Plan. It recognizes that many areas of the community have special considerations or conditions for which more focused, community-driven planning should be undertaken. District Planning allows for the desired form, function, and character of an area to be defined, setting the stage for future Town actions, such as revised development standards, development of new facilities or improvements, and consideration of development proposals that may come forward.

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Background and Process

Previous NDPs were primarily initiated in conjunction with major development project applications with work funded by applicants and undertaken by third-party planning consultants. Because the SVNDP process was Town-initiated and does not revolve around a specific development proposal, it has been completed by Town staff acting as the “planning consultant.”

C. Sierra Valley NDP Process

Figure 1-1 shows the series of steps that were followed to develop the Preferred Concepts and Recommendations for the SVNDP. The steps follow those outlined in the Town Council’s policy on district planning that was adopted in April 2007, and provides the organizing framework for this report. The process steps include:

1. Framework, including identification of the study area boundary, guiding principles and initial issues.
2. Existing Issues, Opportunities and Constraints.
3. Alternatives Review.
4. Preferred Alternative Selection.

Detailed information on the framework, existing conditions, opportunities and constraints is provided in a Background Report included as Appendix A. Chapter 2 includes a complete description of the SVNDP Preferred Concept and related recommendations.

D. Public Workshops

One of the important goals of district planning is to involve the public and key stakeholders, to ensure that relevant issues and concerns are addressed and that the planning outcomes are based on community consensus to the extent possible. The SVNDP process included a community engagement process, through public workshops and meetings with the Planning Commission and Town Council, and consultation with other agencies, particularly the Police Department and Fire District.

The 2010 Census shows that Mammoth’s Hispanic population is growing, and is a significant part of the community. Many of Sierra Valley’s residents are Spanish-speaking, and so a special effort was made to try and engage this group. Advertisements were published in both English and Spanish, and a special workshop was held in Spanish. Despite this, input from

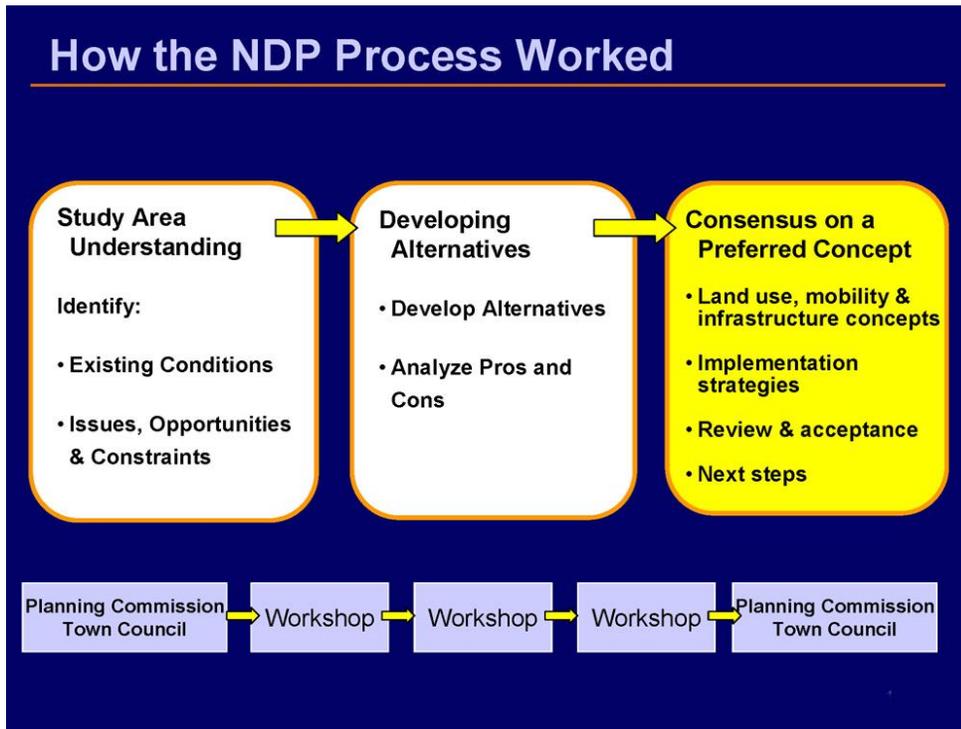


Figure 1-1: NDP Process

the Spanish-speaking community in the NDP process was limited, indicating a continuing need for the Town to make additional and different efforts in the future to reach out to this group.

Two community workshops were held for the SVNDP, in addition to meetings held with the Planning Commission and Public Workshop to review the Framework and this Report. Two week advanced notification of each community workshop ensured a broad and inclusive public process.

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Background and Process

Table 1-1: Key SVNDP Meetings and Workshops

Date	Workshop/Meeting	Meeting Subject
February 23, 2011	Planning Commission Public Workshop/Listening Session	Initial community input on issues to be addressed in SVNDP
March 23, 2011	Planning Commission Meeting	Review and Approve Framework
April 6, 2011	Town Council Meeting	Review and Approve Framework
April 27, 2011	Public Workshop: Issues and Options (English)	Review issues and alternatives.
April 28, 2011	Public Workshop: Issues and Options (Spanish)	Review issues and alternatives
June 29, 2011	Planning Commission: Draft Neighborhood District Planning Study	Review and Recommend Acceptance of SVNDP Study
July 2011	Town Council: Draft Neighborhood District Planning Study	Review and Accept SVNDP Study

Chapter 2. Preferred Concept & Recommendations

The Sierra Valley NDP process described in the previous chapters has resulted in the formulation of a “Preferred Concept” for the district. The Preferred Concept includes an overall summary concept, describing the key features of character, place and function that are envisioned for the Study Area, as well as a series of recommendations to guide planning for the district.

A. Concept Summary

Sierra Valley is a safe, attractive and livable neighborhood for Mammoth Lakes’ families, offering a variety of housing choices and convenient access to transit, shopping, schools and services. The existing forested character and narrow streets that characterize the district are retained, giving Sierra Valley the feeling of a neighborhood “in the woods.” Effective traffic calming on the districts narrow streets helps to provide a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists that share the road with cars. Increased code compliance, maintenance, law enforcement, education and outreach efforts help to improve the livability of the neighborhood, and quality of life for all of Sierra Valley’s residents.

B. Recommendations

The following recommendations implement the concept and address issues, opportunities and constraints identified for Sierra Valley.

1. Neighborhood Character

Recommendation 1.1. Preserve the character of Sierra Valley as a safe, diverse residential neighborhood “in the forest” with a mixture of housing types and styles.

Recommendation 1.2. Develop a low-cost loan program to assist property owners with efforts to upgrade residential properties, including: repainting and exterior renovations, landscaping and lighting improvements, and bringing buildings into code compliance.

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Recommendation 1.3. Create incentives that encourage owners of larger multi-family properties to upgrade and renovate buildings, such as a streamlined design review or exemption from payment of design review fees.

Recommendation 1.4. Where additional height is permitted with provision of understructure parking, as allowed by the Zoning Code, ensure that building design minimizes shade, shadow and other potential effects on neighboring properties.

Recommendation 1.5. Strictly enforce design review and development standards for all projects, but particularly those built at higher densities, to ensure high quality site planning, adequate parking, dumpster locations and screening, and snow storage. Consideration of direct and indirect impacts to neighboring properties should be considered when approving projects, particularly where zoning concessions are being sought.

Recommendation 1.6. Support and facilitate future efforts of community and non-profit groups to improve properties in Sierra Valley that do not meet building code requirements, or have substandard living conditions.

Recommendation 1.7. Support efforts to build community spirit and neighborhood pride in Sierra Valley, through neighborhood events, work with neighborhood representatives, and additional outreach to the Spanish-speaking community.

Recommendation 1.8. Work with Mammoth Disposal and others to dedicate additional resources to Sierra Valley during the annual Town Clean-up Day. Potential ideas include:

- Providing one or more dumpsters and collection points for bulky items within the neighborhood.
- Offering a second clean-up or free dumping day in the fall.
- Mobilizing and assigning additional volunteers to Sierra Valley to assist with clean-up.

2. Housing

Recommendation 2.1. Avoid over-concentrating affordable housing in Sierra Valley by making sure workforce housing programs and strategies are diverse, spread affordable housing among different neighborhoods in Mammoth as much as possible.

Recommendation 2.2. Invest workforce housing funds in acquisition and re-habilitation of existing units in Sierra Valley and elsewhere so as to upgrade them and secure their affordability.

Recommendation 2.3. Ensure that development projects throughout town provide on-site mitigation for their workforce housing demands, and do not permit off-site mitigation units to be placed in the RMF-1 zone.

Recommendation 2.4. Strengthen the Housing Ordinance to ensure that projects awarded density bonuses for housing, as allowed by State law and the Town, adequately plan for open space, snow storage and parking, and provide livable housing units for residents.

Recommendation 2.5. Work with Mammoth Lakes Housing and others to provide information and education about tenants' and landlords' rights and responsibilities.

Recommendation 2.6. Encourage homeownership in Sierra Valley through strategies such as first-time homebuyer assistance and mortgage subsidies.

3. Mobility

a. Traffic Calming

Consider designation of Manzanita Road, Mono Street, Lupin Street, Joaquin Road, Callahan Way and Dorrance Drive as “shared streets,” meaning that it is assumed that vehicles, pedestrian, and bicycles may all be making use of the right of way. To be successful, the shared street concept should make use of appropriate street signage and/or striping, such as that shown in Figure 2-1 below, and potential reductions in vehicle speed limits to ensure safety of all users.



Figure 2-1: Shared Streets Signage and Striping

Recommendation 3.1. If full implementation of a shared street concept is not feasible, implement other measures to encourage vehicles to calm traffic and reduce vehicle speeds. Such measures should avoid the need for substantial reconfiguration of the existing street, be compatible with winter snow removal, and be able to be implemented at relatively low cost. Options include:

- Installation of signage that indicates the presence of other uses, and establishes lower advisory speed limits.
- Installation of chicanes, which are devices to create additional turns in a travel lane, slowing vehicles.
- Turn diverters (provided that they would not cause impacts to other streets, and would allow for adequate emergency access).
- Installation of electronic speed signs that advise motorists of their current speeds.
- Improved police enforcement of speed limits.

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- Speed tables or speed cushions at strategic locations. Devices that can be removed to accommodate winter snow removal are most appropriate.
- Addition of marked high-visibility pedestrian crossings with appropriate striping and signage.
- Striping to give the appearance of a narrower travel lane.



High-Visibility Pedestrian Crossing



Speed Table that Can Accommodate Wide-Axle Emergency Vehicles

Recommendation 3.2. Study opportunities for lighting to be installed for pedestrian safety, that would be consistent with the Town lighting ordinance, and would not negatively affect the character of Sierra Valley.

b. Pedestrian Connectivity

Recommendation 3.3. Study opportunities for additional east-west trail connections to be provided within Sierra Valley. Possible options include use of utility easements (storm drain, water and sewer) owned by the Town and Mammoth Community Water District, and negotiation of new public right-of-way easements with willing property owners.

Recommendation 3.4. Implement recommendations of the Trails System Master Plan to provide a formalized series of pedestrian connections from Sierra Valley across the Shady Rest Tract, and through Sierra Star, in conjunction with future development of Master Plans for those areas.

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Recommendation 3.5. Improve sidewalks along Meridian Boulevard and Main Street to allow for better pedestrian connectivity to and from Sierra Valley.

c. Snow Management

Recommendation 3.6. Study the costs, benefits and feasibility of an enhanced snow management program (such as blowing and trucking snow), funded through a snow management district, to improve winter safety and conditions in Sierra Valley. Formation of an assessment district for snow removal would require the approval of affected property owners.

Recommendation 3.7. Improve enforcement of illegal parking along property frontages and in snow storage areas.

Recommendation 3.8. Work with owners of vacant properties to lease property for snow storage during the winter.

Recommendation 3.9. Improve enforcement of Town snow storage permit requirements to minimize illegal dumping of snow on private property by snow removal operators.

Recommendation 3.10. Ensure that all projects provide for adequate snow storage areas or otherwise deal with snow through an approved snow management plan.

4. Storm Drainage and Flooding

Recommendation 4.1. Implement measures recommended in the 2005 Storm Drain Master Plan, and the 2007 Storm Drain Study. Particular items include:

- An increase in the existing culvert located at north Manzanita from 18 inches to 36 inches.
- Improvements to existing culverts and channels to reduce erosion and sedimentation.

- Installation of upstream storm-water control measures such as infiltration basins and trenches.

Recommendation 4.2. Implement an enhanced public works maintenance program for storm drains within Sierra Valley, consistent with the program previously recommended (see Table 2).

Recommendation 4.3. Ensure upstream development minimizes any potential increases in stormwater runoff through appropriate mitigation measures.

5. Public Safety and Code Enforcement

Recommendation 5.1. As Town resources allow, dedicate additional staff resources to enforcement for building and zoning code violations, and nuisance and quality of life issues. This may include designation of a Community Development Department Neighborhood Coordinator for Sierra Valley who would:

- Be a primary source of contact for code compliance and other complaints.
- Work with Police Department (MLPD), Fire District (MLFPD), Mammoth Disposal, and other Town departments as needed to address complaints and issues.
- Conduct quarterly neighborhood meetings to listen to issues and identify solutions for Sierra Valley.

Recommendation 5.2. Provide public information and outreach to Sierra Valley residents on code compliance procedures and processes.

Recommendation 5.3. Continue to support the proactive efforts of the Wildlife Officer to educate and enforce residents about wildlife issues associated with trash storage and leaving food available for bears and other wildlife.

Recommendation 5.4. Work with Mammoth Disposal and Sierra Valley neighbors to identify opportunities to provide shared neighborhood dumpsters for single family home, to minimize the number of dumpsters and trash cans that are susceptible to wildlife raids.

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	Storm Water Facility	Inspection	Description	Frequency	Maintenance	Equipment
1	Drop Inlets & Catch Basins	Visual	Check drop inlet and catch basin grates to ensure sediment or trash are not blocking flow	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Remove any sediment and trash	Hand Crew and or Vactor truck
		Visual & Sediment Depth Measurement	Check drop inlet/catch basin sump capacity	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Remove sediment or trash from sump if 1/3 capacity is exceeded	Vactor Truck
		Visual	Ensure grates are in place and are not damaged to the point that they are unsafe	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Repair or replace grates to ensure proper working order	Varies
2	Culverts and Inlet/Outlet Structures	Visual	Check culverts for debris that would limit the capacity of the culvert.	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Jet debris out of culvert and remove	Vactor truck
		Visual	Verify that inlet/outlet structures are in place, not eroding and properly convey storm water into/out of the culverts		Re-grade if necessary. Fill eroded area and add riprap protection	Handwork or Backhoe
3	Curb and Gutter	Visual	Check curb/gutters for debris buildup	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Clear debris from curb/gutter. Be sure to remove debris and not allow debris to fall into catch basins	Brooms or street sweeper
		Visual	Check for breakdown of curb (from snowplow activities)		Replace failing curb/gutter as required	Varies
		Visual & Erosion Depth Measurement	Check for erosion behind curb if placed at base of dirt cut slope		Repair erosion with road grindings, rip rap or other material if necessary	Handwork or Backhoe
4	Storm Drain	Visual & Sediment Depth Measurement	Check storm drain system for debris buildup	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Jet/Vacuum debris out of storm drain pipe	Vactor truck
		Visual	Check capacity of storm drain	Immediately after significant storm events	If storm drain capacity is frequently exceeded contact the engineering department	Varies
5	Dry Wells & Infiltration Galleries	Visual & Sediment Depth Measurement	Check dry wells for sediment or trash buildup that will limit capacity	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Remove any sediment and trash	Vactor truck or hand crew with shovels
		Visual & Material Test	Ensure grates are in place and are not damaged to the point that they are unsafe		Repair or replace grates to ensure proper working order	Shop equipment
6	Sand/Oil Separators & Water Quality Treatment Vaults	Visual & Sediment Depth Measurement	Pull lids and visually check for sediment buildup in bottom of unit	Twice annually (Spring and Fall) and after significant storm events	Remove any sediment and trash	Vactor truck
		Visual	Ensure nothing is blocking proper operation of the unit		Remove blockage	Vactor truck or by hand. Follow appropriate confined entry regulations
7	Detention, Retention and Infiltration Basins	Please reference attached maintenance recommendations from the Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington published in February 2005 by the Washington State Department of Ecology				
8	Open Channels	Visual	Check to see if debris, garbage, snow or ice is blocking drainage channel	Monthly and after each snow event	Remove debris, garbage, ice and snow	Backhoe and hand crew
9	<u>Problem Areas</u>					
	Areas Subject to Ponding	Visual	Check problem areas to determine if ponding is occurring	After each storm event and daily during spring snow melt	Vactor ponded water or sweep to catch basin	Vactor truck
	Areas Prone to Sediment Deposition	Visual	Check problem areas to determine if sediment is accumulating	After each storm event and weekly during spring snow melt	Remove accumulated sediment with vactor truck, sweeper or hand crew	Vactor Truck, Sweeper or Hand Crew
	Nuisance Water Crossing - Snow Melt - Icing	Visual	Check nuisance areas to determine if snow melt is causing icing problems	Daily during winter and spring snow melt	Deploy deicing material or traction abrasive	Haul truck with spreader or hand crew

Table 2: Recommended Storm Drain Maintenance Program

Recommendation 5.5. Support the work of the MLPD to create a positive working relationship between local law enforcement and neighborhood residents.

Recommendation 5.6. As resources permit, provide additional police patrols of Sierra Valley to create a visible law enforcement presence and deter and deal with crime and nuisance behavior.

Recommendation 5.7. Work with neighbors and the MLPD to form a neighborhood watch group in Sierra Valley.

Recommendation 5.8. Continue to work with MLFPD to monitor and enforce defensible space and other fire safety requirements.

6. Parks and Open Space

Recommendation 6.1. Ensure that future multi-family developments provide the required amount of private and/or common open space areas, or equivalent facilities.

Recommendation 6.2. Support the construction of neighborhood parks within the Shady Rest tract and Sierra Star, in conjunction with development of their respective that are convenient and accessible to Sierra Valley residents.

C. Conclusions

Completion of the SVNDP Process resolves district planning for an important “locals” neighborhood that has not been the subject of focused planning or substantial investment in the past. A number of issue areas, like storm drainage and traffic are likely to require additional study to determine the scope and cost of potential improvements, and to identify the most appropriate solutions. The concepts and recommendations of this report identify a range of feasible solutions which, although not requiring substantial physical or new infrastructure, will nonetheless require investment of staff, community and other resources to be successfully implemented. Fostering and building a sense of neighborhood pride and a desire for residents to invest in the community will be an important component of bringing about improvement in Sierra Valley, as will partnership between the Town, Police Department and Fire District, Mammoth Lakes Housing, and community members.