



City of Lakeport

Downtown Improvements Plan

Made possible by CDBG funds

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City of Lakeport Downtown Improvement Plan

Part 1: Project Background

Introduction

The City of Lakeport, with a population of about 5,000, is the county seat of Lake County, California. This city is also a popular access point to Clear Lake for recreational boaters. Ample parking, boat launches, and a pier are provided for visitors just beyond Lakeport's historic downtown district. The area's natural beauty, affordability, and charming small-town character are becoming increasingly attractive to visitors, as well as new residents and businesses.

Over the years, the City of Lakeport has implemented small improvement projects in the downtown area in a piecemeal fashion—a new length of sidewalk here, a smattering of new trees there—resulting in a disorganized, patchwork feeling and lack of unified downtown identity. In addition, increased traffic has led to parking, circulation, and pedestrian safety concerns. With an expanding role as Lake County's hub of commercial activity and tourism, the City of Lakeport would like to improve the infrastructure, functionality, and appearance of the downtown commercial core.

The Lakeport Downtown Improvement plan is an outline for an organized approach to implementing civic improvement projects critical to revitalization. Building on the foundation of the Lakeport General Plan (1989) and the Lakeport Redevelopment Plan (1999), the recommendations set forth in the Lakeport Downtown Improvement Plan support the City's stated goals of

- increasing property values,
- encouraging pedestrian movement and special events,
- preserving and enhancement of historic buildings and sites,
- retaining Lake County's small-town character (while accommodating growth)
- improving retail sales volume for downtown businesses.

Study Area

This Improvement Plan encompasses Lakeport's downtown commercial core, which is comprised of seven blocks arranged in a rough t-shape within the grid formed by Forbes, Main, and Park Streets, running north-south, and Armstrong, First, Second, Third and Fourth Streets running west-east (Main Street is also State Route 29). This area is one of six recognized commercial zones in Lakeport. In addition to historic architecture and a variety of businesses and restaurants, the downtown core includes The Lake County Museum (with an associated public green), several residences, and a Carnegie Library. The eastern border boasts the County Courthouse and the western border is a lakefront park and boating access.

Goals and Objectives

The City of Lakeport has identified several goals for improving the Downtown core. One primary goal is to increase pedestrian safety and enhance pedestrian amenities so that people will enjoy walking within the district, browsing shops and contributing to a lively atmosphere. In order to meet this goal, the Downtown Improvement Plan has explored the benefits of sidewalk reconstruction, redirecting traffic and traffic calming with bulbouts, parking reconfiguration, new surfaces at crosswalks, comprehensive ADA accessibility, attractive street furniture and new street trees. Many of these elements, in addition to increased landscaping and lighting, contribute to another important goal, enhancement of the overall image of the downtown area. It also was felt that identification of key spaces and areas for specific or special streetscape treatment would be an important part of improving the downtown, which led to a concentration of streetscape improvements at corners (capitalizing on the space made available by the

new bulbouts), and experimentation with landscape versus hardscape themes. Another key space that was looked at was the alleyway connecting second and third streets. Recognizing the unique and valuable traits already embodied by the downtown district, enhancing existing open space resources and strengthening linkages to the lakefront area were goals approached through a unified, rhythmic, and enveloping streetscape plan that identifies and links the entirety of the study area. Complimentary and integrated streetscape elements support the final goal, which was the establishment of a high standard of design as a model for public and private sector improvements.

Process

The Downtown Improvement Plan process began in March 2005 with creating a base map from digital city information. The map showed building outlines, locations of open space, existing trees, and relative widths of the road. The next step was conducting a comprehensive site analysis of the above grade, observable streetscape infrastructure in the downtown core. This analysis culminated in a brief report which discussed issues such as pavement, curb and gutter and sidewalk conditions, existing street furniture, street tree species, lighting, and accessibility issues, as well as opportunities and constraints throughout the project area. Several dozen site photographs were taken at this stage. The report concluded that the exposed infrastructure is in need of extensive replacement and repair, especially the streets and sidewalks.

The second phase of preparation for the Downtown Improvement Plan involved developing and drawing two Prototypical Draft Concept Plans showing potential treatments-- parking configuration, traffic calming concepts, paving treatments, plant material selections, lighting fixture selections and street furniture—as applied to the both the overall study area and a typical intersection within that area. Further exploration included pictures and manufacturer information for potential amenities. These Prototypical Draft Concept Plans were used as communication tools during the downtown design effort.

The design process was augmented by the participating members of City of Lakeport staff and Council Members, periodic public presentation and review, and key stakeholder interviews in which the consultants held private, in-depth interview sessions with local residents and business owners. Feedback gathered from these opportunities was incorporated into the Prototypical Draft Concept Plans as they developed and then the Preferred Concept Plan, which was a refinement of ideas that had been supported during the review process.

An Opinion of Probable Construction Costs for implementation of the Downtown Improvement Plan was prepared based on the Preferred Concept Plan. This Opinion, which includes projections for the improvements, landscaping and street furniture, is included in spreadsheet form at the end of this report. Due to the many variables surrounding bidding and construction conditions, this opinion can not be regarded as a guarantee of actual costs of construction. Rather, it is a very rough opinion of costs that City staff can use for preliminary budgeting and funding procurement.

The last phase of the Downtown Improvement Plan was producing the final rendering of the Preferred Concept Plan and the preparation of this report, which outlines the principal features of the Downtown Improvement Plan, as well as the implications of these improvements, then discusses feasibility of constructing and funding plan and wraps up with recommendations for attaining the City of Lakeport's goal of revitalizing the downtown core.

Part 2: The Downtown Improvement Plan

Roadway Improvements

All roadway surfaces within the downtown core should be reconstructed so that roadways are safe, easily maintained, and provide for uniform appearance in the downtown core. All paving within crosswalks should be colored and stamped (to an ADA-compatible depth) in order to resemble historic brick or cobble paving. White thermoplastic striping should outline the decorative pavement to enhance safety.

Traffic Routing

Currently, all streets in the downtown core host two-way traffic. As mentioned previously, Main Street continues as State Route 29 after it passes through Lakeport, and has a center turn lane in the downtown core. While this Downtown Improvement Plan does not specify major changes to traffic patterns, it does call for two traffic calming measures and suggest further study.

The first proposal is the use of bulbouts on South Main Street and Park Street. These bulbouts will define the district and each separate block, as well as provide additional horizontal surface on which to place benches and trees. In addition, they enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety by narrowing the streets at intersections, causing drivers to slow and proceed cautiously. These bulbouts should be engineered to a radius that allows for cars towing trailers to turn comfortably at corners. Drainage concerns will be alleviated by trench grates and drop inlets that tie into the City's storm water system.

Another way to calm traffic is to add controls at intersections, which are suggested at the intersection of South Main and Martin Streets (3-way stop), and the intersection at Armstrong and Main. The City of Lakeport should consider undertaking a specialized traffic study in the near future in order to address the potential need for, and configuration of, additional traffic controls at appropriate downtown intersections.

A specialized traffic study may also address the feasibility of using Main Street and Forbes Street as a one-way couplet sometime in the future in order to organize heavier traffic flows.

Mass Transit

Four separate bus routes traverse the Downtown Core, connecting Lakeport to Ukiah, Santa Rosa, and other towns around Clear Lake. Two bus stops exist a short distance from one another, and passengers often have to transfer between the two. Lake Transit Authority has suggested that future plans for this area consider consolidating these two stops into one "transit center" in front of the courthouse on South Main between Third and Second Streets. This would increase pedestrian safety, streamline traffic flow, and allow for efficient distribution of amenities, and the possibility should be included in the proposed traffic study. As it is, this Downtown Improvement Plan calls for no change to the Bus Stops aside from new striping and furniture.

Parking

At this time, parking configurations in the Downtown Core will remain static, with parallel spaces provided on either side of most streets. (Exceptions are Second Street and Third Street, which each have diagonal parking along the square).

At a later time, once alternative north/south traffic routes are developed west of Downtown, the City of Lakeport should reconsider diagonal parking on Main Street and side streets. Diagonal parking would increase the number of parking spaces available to potential downtown shoppers. However, at present, the benefits of the center turn lane,

which is used for emergency access, boaters with trailers making left turns, and commercial loading, outweigh the benefits of replacing it with diagonal parking.

City Hall Parking Lot

The existing vacant lot on the corner of Third and Park Street will be refurbished as a parking lot for City Hall. Improvements such as resurfacing, striping, new curb configurations, landscaping are indicated on the plan and would provide 22 new parking spaces. All elements, such as trees, landscaping, and paving will be consistent with improvements specified on the Downtown Improvement Plan.

There is an opportunity to enhance the pedestrian experience of the downtown by adding furniture, street trees, lighting, and decorative paving to the alley between 2nd and 3rd Streets and adjacent to City Hall. This alley could provide both pedestrian and vehicular access and could also enhance the pedestrian experience of the downtown by providing an alternate walking route and additional seating areas. Elements of these potential future improvements, such as lighting, paving treatments, furniture, and tree species would also be consistent with the Downtown Improvement Plan. Alleyway improvements, if implemented, would most likely be undertaken by property owner with support from the City of Lakeport.

Paving Treatments

All sidewalks within the Study Area will be demolished, removed and replaced, along with curbs, gutters, and ADA ramps, to provide uniform appearance, a standard of safety, and the opportunity to implement a regular pattern of street trees and decorative paving accents. Sidewalks should be natural gray and scored in a historic 2.5' x2.5' square pattern.

Decorative paving will consist of concrete colored and stamped to resemble brick, extending from building face to back of curb at intervals consistent with the placement of street trees for the length of South Main and on First, Second, and Third Streets on the block between South Main and Forbes. Bulbouts will also contain areas of complimentary decorative paving, which will distinguish them visually and psychologically for both drivers and pedestrians.

Landscaping and Trees

A single species chosen from the following list should be used along the streets in the downtown commercial district in order to maintain a discrete identity and feeling of harmony:

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|---|----------------------------|
| - <i>Acer saccharum</i> 'Endowment' | Endowment Sugar Maple |
| - <i>Crataegus phaenopyrum</i> 'Fastigiata' | Washington Thorn |
| - <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'Fastigiata' | Fastigiata Maidenhair Tree |
| - <i>Sophora japonica</i> 'Columnaris' | Columnar Scholar Tree |

All four species are deciduous, take on a columnar shape with a narrow crown, show seasonal color, and are tolerant of hot summers and city conditions. Shading is desired, although impediments to views on-or off-street are not. Root barriers should be used to mitigate damage to paving over time, and trees with invasive taproot systems should be avoided in order to protect sewer system laterals. The trees will be planted in 4' square wells and protected with tree grates. Final placement of the street trees requires careful analysis in order to avoid conflicts with lighting, signage visibility, and building entrances.

A small, colorful accent tree, such as *Lagerstroemia indica* – Crape Myrtle, is specified at corners, often in pairs, where space allows and visibility is not impaired. This treatment

will “announce” the district, call out the corners, and lend interest for the passerby, as well provide as shade over benches.

New, vintage-style decorative streetlights were installed on South Main relatively recently, which include hanging baskets planted with seasonal flowers. This civic landscaping scheme is a pleasant and popular practice that will be extended throughout the district as the streetlight program expands. The baskets will be irrigated by an automatic system installed concurrently with roadway and sidewalk replacements.

Street Furniture

Lighting

New streetlights by Sternberg Lighting will replace outdated cobra fixtures throughout the study area. These streetlights will be identical to the new, vintage-style decorative streetlights recently installed on South Main Street. Manufactured by Sternberg Lighting, these fixtures include planter baskets with an irrigation system, a flag holder, and banner arms. Lake County Electric holds the applicable specifications. The finish is “Verde Green.”

Benches

Benches are located throughout the study area, with a variety of placements and orientations, such as: toward buildings (at curbs), toward the street (against building fronts, under awnings), facing each other (under trees) and at bulbouts. Benches should be surface mounted to allow for potential changes in location.

Benches should abide by the theme established by the streetlights, with a historic flavor in details and finish. The City of Lakeport may choose to specify the same type of benches that have been used in the past (a cast-iron frame with wooden slats manufactured by Timberform), or install a new design that complements the lighting and other streetscape elements more completely. If the same benches are used, the Marine Teak seating option is the most suitable as it will resist vandalism more effectively and retain an attractive patina longer. Regardless of what type is specified, the finish on metal surfaces should either be black or, more preferably, match the Verde Green finish of the lighting.

Litter Receptacles

The City of Lakeport currently uses a square, flat-topped waste and recycling container furnished by Columbia Cascade, from their Craftsmen series. This is a satisfactory model for the downtown core. Receptacles should be placed at each corner and in midblock locations throughout the project area. Finish should be black or treated to match the Verde Green color of the streetlights.

Newspaper and Bike Racks

These amenities should be concentrated in bulbouts at regular intervals, as shown on the Preferred Concept Plan.

Alleyway Improvements

The alley between Second and Third Streets on the block defined by South Main and Park Streets could be enhanced with decorative paving, an overhead arch feature, and accent plantings should the City of Lakeport and the merchants with frontage on this alley choose to capitalize on this adjunct thoroughfare. Many towns used this “nook and cranny” approach to enhancing the outdoor shopping experience.

Part 3: Implications and Feasibility

Further Study

In addition to traffic study discussed above, it is also recommended that the City of Lakeport undertake an extensive survey of the finish floor elevations of downtown buildings in order to furnish accurate ADA access. A study of potential future improvements to Lakeport's downtown water, sewer, and drainage systems would also be beneficial to ensure compatibility of roadway improvements.

The Downtown Improvement Plan presented herein enjoys the support of many local residents and business owners who attended one or both of two public workshops presented on the subject during 2005. Downtown merchants support the "walkability" of the plan as well as the improved image and retention of present parking levels. Residents like the "friendliness" and traffic control. The City Council has also expressed approval for the Downtown Improvement Plan. The next step for the City of Lakeport will be preparation of engineering plans and construction documents, followed by putting the project out to bid and selecting a contractor, then finally beginning the construction process. This section discusses potential impacts of the Downtown Improvement Plan.

Budget

The City of Lakeport Redevelopment Agency and City of Lakeport Community Development Department will work to procure and schedule funding for this Project. Budgets should be established early on and adjusted for inflation and an altered bidding environment if project is phased. Also, budgets should provide a generous design contingency allowance, as well as slightly larger construction contingency allowance, in case of unforeseen conditions in old sections of downtown. Lake Transit Authority has expressed interest in helping to fund (but not design) a transit center on Main Street. Project proponents should explore the many public grant opportunities that support revitalization projects.

As improvements are implemented, the city's streetscape maintenance budget will need to be adjusted accordingly. The City of Lakeport may create a maintenance district and assess business owners a small monthly or annual fee in order to offset costs, or choose another funding mechanism.

Timeline

The timeline for implementing the Downtown Improvement Plan will vary, depending on whether construction is phased or not, which will in turn depend on funding availability. The first step, preparation of construction drawings, could take up to a year or more for entire project area. The City of Lakeport may also consider replacing or improving infrastructure or undergrounding utilities when replacing the roadway, which could add to design and engineering time.

Once drawings are finalized, the project will go out to bid, generally for a period of several weeks. After a contractor has been selected, demolition and construction will begin. It is recommended that all roadways, sidewalks, curbs and gutters be replaced at once, rather than piece by piece. Likewise, if the City decides to repair, upgrade, or replace city utility lines, all infrastructure improvements (water, sewer, electricity, gas, as well as storm drainage, lighting conduit, irrigation lines, etc.) should be installed prior to streetscape improvements. Project proponents should institute an extensive merchant and resident outreach program to notify businesses of road and sidewalk closures, utility breaks, and other potential inconveniences.