

Fort Bragg's New Streetscape

The coastal City of Fort Bragg is moving forward with a multi-phase renovation of streets and improvement of sidewalks in its historic downtown. Following a conceptual design resulting from the City's Downtown Revitalization Study in 2002, three phases are now substantially complete. So far the responses from both visitors and locals have been favorable.

Designed during a series of Town Hall meetings in 2002, led by Al Zalinka of RBF Consulting and City Manager Linda Ruffing (then City Planning Director), the project was envisioned as a means to revitalize Fort Bragg's historic downtown.

The first phase, Main & Laurel Street Signalization and Streetscape Project, made pedestrian safety and other improvements to this busy intersection of Highway 1. Traffic signals, sidewalk corner bulb-outs, crosswalks with stamped asphalt of special colors and textures, old-fashioned light fixtures, street trees, benches, and matching receptacles for waste and recycling were among the upgrades. Funds came from a Caltrans Pedestrian Safety Grant, an Urban Development Action Grant, and MCOG's Regional Surface Transportation Program funds.

The second phase, Franklin Street Reconstruction and Streetscape Project, covered design, engineering and total reconstruction of the northern half of Franklin Street, parallel to Highway 1. This project, funded by MCOG's Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and a local match from the City's Redevelopment Project Fund, was built in 2007. Within the Central Business District, installations included 11-foot wide sidewalks, trees, benches, bicycle racks, pedestrian crosswalks with special texture and color, ADA-compliant curb cuts for wheelchair access, 15-foot tall historic-styled lamp posts, and some corner bulb-outs.

"Together, these improvements make the street and sidewalk safer and more enjoyable for pedestrians. This is absolutely essential for the success of any business that opens its front doors directly onto a city sidewalk," says Dan Gjerde, a Fort Bragg councilmember and representative on MCOG's Board of Directors.

The third phase, Downtown Streetscape Project, is fully funded for Spring 2009. Pedestrian improvements will be constructed on five east-west streets, from Highway 1 to Franklin Street. Funded by a \$1.5 million Transportation Enhancement grant from MCOG, the City provided a substantial match of Redevelopment funds and the voter-approved local half-cent transportation sales tax. (This "self-help" tax, which MCOG encouraged by commissioning polling data, generates roughly \$800,000 annually for street repairs and will expire on January 1, 2015.) This phase is expected to cost approximately \$2.2 million.

All of this road construction has kept Public Works Director Dave Goble and his small staff busy, as they have at the same time juggled several multi-million dollar upgrades to the town's water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

“This community could not have built these improvements without the state and federal transportation dollars and support from MCOG,” Gjerde adds.

A fourth phase, Highway 1 Circulation & Safety Improvements, has been programmed by MCOG in the 2008 RTIP. This phase also improves the flow of vehicles on Highway 1 in the downtown area. A traffic model has shown that the project will reduce vehicle congestion through installation of a north-bound trap lane at Alder Street, among other benefits. Final design will go through public review in 2008, and construction funding will be available during the summer of 2012.

As with many projects of substantial size and scope, funds were pooled from various sources for a successful outcome. MCOG offers congratulations to all involved for a job well done. The project is an inspiring example to other communities in the Mendocino region.

“For Mendocino County to thrive, it needs to be able to attract people who have equity and can invest in our local communities. This type of enhanced infrastructure provides the enriched lifestyle that is expected by most Californians,” states Gjerde, who co-wrote several of Fort Bragg’s grant applications. “I hope every community in Mendocino County will plan and pursue funding to construct similar projects.”

More information is available at www.fortbragg.com. Follow links to “City Government,” then “Community Development.”

Fort Bragg Project Funding			
Phase 1	\$ 196,000	Caltrans - Pedestrian Safety Grant	
	188,000	City - Urban Devt. Action Grant	
	50,007	MCOG - RSTP (federal funds)	
		Phase 1 Total	\$ 434,007
Phase 2	2,427,000	MCOG - 2002 & 2006 RTIP (state)	
	1,200,000	City - Redevelopment Fund, UDAG	
		Phase 2 Total	3,627,000
Phase 3	1,498,000	MCOG - TE Grant (federal funds)	
	700,000	City - Redevt., Trans. Sales Tax, UDAG	
		Phase 3 Total	2,198,000
Phase 4	2,281,000	MCOG - 2008 RTIP (state funds)	
	919,000	City - To be determined	
		Phase 4 Total	3,200,000
		GRAND TOTAL	\$ 9,459,007

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By Janet Orth with Dan Gjerde