

Chapter 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

A. Introduction

The purpose of the Gualala Community Action Plan Phase II (CAP II) is to create a Downtown Design Plan as described in the implementation section of the first phase CAP. The Downtown Design Plan includes the following components: a circulation plan, a parking plan, a streetscape design plan, and a phasing and funding strategy.

The focus of the Community Action Plan is the creation of a “livable community”: a place where residents and visitors alike can share a healthful, safe, and convenient system for getting through and around town. To be effective, the plan needs to simultaneously accommodate vehicular and non-motorized travel.

The streetscape design solutions are based on the range of options derived from the Phase I effort and are focused on the downtown area only. When applicable and safe, commentary from the public outreach and research phases of the project are included and refined, and have provided the content for specific recommendations of this Plan.

Over time, project components will be carried out by community members, with assistance from appropriate government and non-government agencies. All components will need to be designed and engineered to meet the requirements of Mendocino County Planning, Caltrans, and the California Coastal Commission.

This document contains five chapters organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 Project Overview: provides an overview of the project, background efforts, the project area, and how the design plan relates to other agency documents.
- Chapter 2 Circulation Plan: discusses circulation issues including vehicular, pedestrian and bicycles both in downtown and possible road way extensions. Proposed Hwy. 1 improvements for a 64’ right-of-way are also included.
- Chapter 3 Streetscape Design Plan: provides a detailed improvement program, meant to enhance Gualala’s downtown, including walkways, crosswalks, garden strips and planted medians, lighting and street furniture.
- Chapter 4 Downtown Parking Plan: Outlines the issues with parking in the downtown, explores options for addressing those issues, and makes recommendations to improve parking in Downtown Gualala
- Chapter 5 Implementation: outlines suggested next steps to implement the design plan, preliminary concept level cost estimates, and funding mechanisms appropriate for consideration.

The appendices at the end of this document offer supplementary information in support of the report's recommendations, including; 11x17 downtown streetscape plan reductions, streetscape amenities, the public outreach strategy, and public workshop results.

B. Background

The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), through a Caltrans Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant, had previously hired RRM Design Group consulting team to conduct an outreach process, and to create a Community Action Plan (CAP) for the town of Gualala.

The purpose of the CAP Phase I was to develop alternative approaches for traffic calming, increased pedestrian and bicycle safety, evaluate parking supply, recommendations to improve parking and travel circulation, beautify the Highway 1 in downtown, as well as identify a strategy and funding sources for implementing the proposed improvements. As part of that strategy the Phase I study also recommended a subsequent Downtown Streetscape Design Plan, as well as address solutions for circulation and parking.

Upon receiving a "Community Based Transportation Planning" grant from Caltrans for this second phase of work, MCOG retained RRM Design Group to work with the community to prepare this Phase II Downtown Design Plan. Once again the community of Gualala was engaged in a participatory process to address and resolve streetscape and parking issues in the downtown. The results of the public workshops for both phases have provided a vital foundation to this document (please refer to the MCOG website and Appendix D for some of the workshop results).

The proposed improvements in this plan accommodate, in spirit, the provisions of the Gualala Town Plan (2002), albeit within a narrower right-of-way for Highway 1 than specified in that Plan. *The Downtown Design Plan was presented to MCOG and the County Board of Supervisors as well as the community of Gualala in (date) for feedback and approval (to include upon adoption of Phase II).*

C. Project Area Description

The project area for the Gualala CAP II Downtown Design Plan is approximately a mile in length, starting at Old State Highway and extending to the Gualala Mobile Court, just north of Ocean Drive. This area includes the "commercial district" of Gualala, and considers access to adjoining residential and emergency services. Since this study was funded by a Caltrans grant, the main focus of the project has been along the Highway 1 corridor.

Highway 1 is both a state highway and a regional arterial that provides north- south access along the Pacific Coast. It is also Gualala's 'Main Street' thus serving many purposes to the community and the region. As a local "main" street, it is the primary pedestrian, bicycle, and transit route serving Gualala and provides access to businesses and residential areas beyond.



Fig. 1-1 Project Area Map

Development in Gualala along Highway 1 is characterized by varied building setbacks and shoulder widths. The shoulders are often used for continuous driveways, and nonconforming pull-in and parallel parking. This increases potential points of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians in the downtown area. There is virtually no sidewalk available to pedestrians, and pedestrians are often forced to walk on the roadway shoulder. The road system that connects residential areas to the downtown is mostly disconnected, which leaves little choice in alternative travel routes. Residents and visitors alike tend to rely on automobiles due to topography and lack of pedestrian and bike facilities. Only one marked crosswalk exists between the post office and Surf Supermarket, and parallel parked vehicles adjacent to the buildings hinder visibility of people attempting to cross the street.

This document recommends a comprehensive rehabilitation of Gualala's pedestrian environment, in combination with certain traffic-calming measures, to provide residents and travelers a safe, functional and pleasant experience as they shop, work, and visit Gualala's downtown core.

D. How to Use this Document

In conjunction with the Gualala Town Plan (2002), and the Community Action Plan (2007), this document should be used as a guide for implementation of improvements proposed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this report. The suggested improvements are at a design concept level and do not constitute construction drawings. This report includes proposed strategies and possible funding sources for construction and maintenance of the design elements. It is recognized that the Downtown Design Plan improvements will take time to achieve and it is presumed that future renovation of some private parcels will be necessary.

To maximize the applicability of the document, it will be presented to the Mendocino Council of Governments and the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors in addition to the community of Gualala. Once accepted by MCOG, it should be made easily accessible to the

public online, at the local library, and appropriate local agency offices, such as Action Network.

Below is an outline of the ways the Gualala CAP II Downtown Design Plan can be useful regarding specific project aspects:

1. Circulation

Chapter 2 addresses the proposed 64' right-of-way improvements and the greater circulation opportunities for the community, and makes recommendations for local road extensions and upgrades.

2. Streetscape Design

Chapter 3 of this document describes design solutions on a conceptual level for travel lanes, medians and turn pockets, walkways, crosswalks, landscaping and street furniture. In addition, many illustrations are incorporated to more clearly communicate streetscape, circulation and parking concepts. When the community of Gualala is ready to go forward with implementation, designers should be able to use this Downtown Design Plan as a foundation to develop detailed, working drawings for streetscape improvements.

3. Parking

It is paramount that Gualala's parking issues be addressed for the streetscape plan to move forward. Chapter 4 discusses the loss of on-street parking and solutions for replacement on private parcels.

4. Implementation

Chapter 5 describes the necessary action items to be taken after acceptance of this plan, and outlines suggested funding sources for construction and maintenance. Capital improvement projects generally require careful planning and coordination with multiple agencies. The initial step is finding and applying for funding to undertake design, engineering, and construction. Chapter 5 discusses several state, county and local grant opportunities that support the kind of improvements proposed for Gualala. This Design Plan, with its detailed descriptions of preferred improvements, will be of fundamental importance when seeking and applying for grants and other sources of public funds.

E. Community Involvement and Leadership

This Plan came to fruition due to concerned and devoted members of the Gualala community. This dedicated group has taken on a leadership role in order to address downtown concerns, spending unpaid, personal time to create and coordinate committees to perform oversight and research.

As presented during the outreach process for the Phase II project, some of the proposed changes for parking and circulation will require private land owners and their tenants to work together to make parking improvements. Suggested modifications in the Downtown Design Plan include innovative ways of sharing spaces at different hours of operation and developing additional public parking spaces.

Part of the purpose in creating this Plan has been to efficiently gather community input, make professional recommendations, and provide current and future leaders with a solid, clearly-defined and well-documented picture of the community's future character. Community leaders will be able to use this plan as a reference to support applications for project funding. In addition, Chapter 5 offers a synopsis of next steps, recommendations, and strategies that charts a course for community leaders to follow.

F. Relationship to Other Agency Documents and Programs

1. Mendocino County Local Coastal Program

As an unincorporated community, Gualala falls under the jurisdiction of Mendocino County and is subject to the Mendocino County General Plan. Its coastal location requires governance by the Mendocino County Local Coastal Plan, which provides general goals and policies regulating development throughout the entire coastal zone. In 1990, the County Board of Supervisors established the Gualala Municipal Advisory Council (GMAC) to advise the Board on development applications, initiate long-range planning efforts, and to update the Mendocino County General Plan as it pertains to the Gualala area.

2. Gualala Town Plan (GTP)

Ten years after its completion some of the goals and policies contained in the GTP are viewed by many to be impractical. For instance, most citizens agree that the Gualala Town Plan should be amended to eliminate the recommended 80 foot right-of-way for Highway 1, which would involve considerable land acquisition in addition to the proposed bike lanes in order to retain parking along the Highway. But, because future grant funding was predicated on being consistent with the GTP, the community appears to have become reconciled with the need to accommodate bicycle paths in downtown Gualala. There is strong support for a narrower 64' right-of-way and removal of on-street parking—if it will result in a recovery of most of those parking spaces removed from along Highway 1, and in the improvements desired to enhance the livability, safety, and attractiveness of the downtown area.

3. The PG&E Utility Undergrounding Study

It is critical that downtown improvements be coordinated with the proposed plan for undergrounding utilities along Highway 1. The undergrounding project is being lead by AT&T in coordination with PG&E. The best possible scenario is that the two projects be planned and implemented simultaneously, in order to maximize efficiency, minimize costs of materials and labor, and shorten the period of disturbance to local residents and merchants. The Downtown Design Plan has been provided to the undergrounding project engineers, and the County is helping to coordinate the location of stormwater facilities, the Gualala Community Services sewer lines, and locations of the Gualala Water Company water lines. Please also refer to the chapter 5 for more discussion.