

Boulder Creek plan centers on Highway 9

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BOULDER CREEK — Highway 9 dominated the discussion at Thursday's Town Plan meeting as surely as it dominates the town being discussed.

A lively crowd of more than 150 residents showed up at the Boulder Creek Elementary School for the third of a series of Town Plan workshops to see what planners had in mind for Boulder Creek.

Terry Bottomley, of the San Francisco-based design firm of Freedman, Tung & Bottomley, presented the planners' interpretation of ideas voiced by residents at the first two meetings. The firm was hired by the county at a cost of \$40,000 to put on the workshops, make recommendations and draw up plans.

Priorities emphasized by the audience centered around Highway 9, including parking, getting kids safely across the street and slowing traffic through town and bike lanes. Also listed were improving parks and making a community gathering place.

The most discussed idea of the evening was a combination of angle parking, street trees and ornamental street lights on Highway 9.

Bottomley pointed out the advantages of angle parking: it would provide nearly twice the parking without buying new land; effectively narrow the street; slow down traffic; and create a shorter pedestrian route across Highway 9.

Several residents pointed out the difficulties of dealing with Caltrans over changes to Highway 9.

"How much of your town are you going to give away to through traffic?" responded Bottomley.

Planners divided the town into two gateways and the central commercial district. The north gateway is anchored by the library and Junction Park. The south gateway, at Lomond Street and Highway 9, was suggested as an area for a park, a bed and breakfast, or more retail stores. They suggested concentrating the shopping district downtown to avoid strip development in the making to the south along Highway 9 to Lorenzo.

Planners also recommended guidelines to preserve the town's distinctive architecture of Western false fronts and arcades.

Their proposals included making Pine Street a two-way street; fencing the gas station at the corner of Big Basin and Highway 9; and shortening the left-turn lane from Highway 9 onto Big Basin.

To increase the safety of children, they suggested a bike lane from the town north to Redwood Elementary School, now under construction, and a sidewalk on the south side of Lomond Street leading down from Boulder Creek Elementary School.

The question of how the changes would be paid for came up periodically through the evening.

Two possible funding sources would be an assessment district or a redevelopment district, according to Bottomley. He said the final workshop will set priorities and look at costs.

For information on the next meeting, call 425-2955 or 425-2201.

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