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# New look slated for Felton

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FELTON — Historically renovated buildings, a railroad linking Santa Cruz with Felton and a major improvement to an old bottlenecked intersection are in the future for Felton Village, the "gateway to the San Lorenzo Valley."

Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Board of Supervisors, the Felton Design Plan is about to be undertaken.

Supervisor Joe Cucchiara, who successfully lobbied the board for the funding, said the design plan will act as "an umbrella," pulling together various projects nearing completion or being discussed for Felton these days:

- The renovation of the Felton Covered Bridge, taking place now, and a proposed streambank restoration project;

- Widening of the Highway 9 and Graham Hill Road intersection to Mount Hermon Road, which the state recommended for funding just Thursday (see story this page);

- A Santa Cruz to Felton railroad. This project is one of several the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District will study this year. If Measure A on the November ballot passes, this project could be eligible for federal funding. Also, Roaring Camp has expressed interest in buying the Southern Pacific right-of-way on the rail line that was used to carry freight.

The design plan will join government and private business in a venture to bring a new look to the downtown, casting it in the mold of its turn-of-the-century logging days.

Cucchiara and others in Felton hope the facelift will spark an economic vitality in their little village.

"I've heard the concern from business people here that Scotts Valley is bleeding off their commercial vitality," said Cucchiara.

Felton business people hope to attract tourists, hikers and just plain folks to their commercial center.

Mike DiDonato of Roaring Camp said the business community is behind the project 100 percent.

"There are so many exciting possibilities," he said.

Felton stands at the top of a vast recreation area that includes Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, Fall Creek and even Pogonip and Wilder Ranch near Santa Cruz.

DiDonato envisions hiking trails from these areas leading to the downtown area of Felton.

Another idea is to make the Felton Covered Bridge, a national landmark that's under renovation now, the "focal point" of the village, he said.

As part of the Felton Bridge project, the streambank under the historic span is being redesigned. The visionaries see a network of trails, sidewalks and bicycle paths linking the bridge with Felton's "Main Street" (Highway 9) and the larger recreation area beyond.

DiDonato said there's been talk of building cafes and restaurants that open onto the San Lorenzo River.

Cucchiara said the design plan will try to tie together different projects under construction or planned for Felton, with

solutions to the problems of limited parking space, traffic congestion, underground utilities and pedestrian safety.

Cucchiara said the timeline is as follows: The county will issue Requests for Proposals (contracts) in October, with a response deadline of November. A selection on an architect, developer, land-use consultant or consortium of similar kinds of professionals will be made by the end of November. In December, the contract firm will gather background data in preparation for launching five public workshops. Cucchiara said the process will follow the procedure used in designing the Boulder Creek Library.

The contractor will solicit input from the community before beginning any

drawings.

Cucchiara said the Felton Design Plan is mandated by the county General Plan. Two other areas in the San Lorenzo Valley are slated for similar planning, Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek.

Cucchiara decided to focus on Felton "because it is the gateway to the San Lorenzo Valley. Also, over the past couple of years, I've been working on several projects in the Felton area that have been completed or are about to be completed.

"The building revitalization is in direct response to private owners willing to revitalize their property," said Cucchiara.

DiDonato said Roaring Camp is among several businesses planning to take an active role in the design plans.