

*The following chapter outlines the Plan Area for this study, discusses previous planning efforts in Laytonville and current transportation planning projects, and provides an overview of community-based planning efforts.*

## *A. Project Context*

Laytonville is an unincorporated, rural community located in the coastal mountains of Northern Mendocino County. Laytonville is located at the historic crossroads of Highway 101 and Dos Rios/Branscomb Roads, the east/west axis from Round Valley to the coast. The town center is impacted by high speeds and safety concerns along Highway 101, small businesses struggle to keep their doors open, and many describe the downtown area as shabby and unappealing. Laytonville serves a population nearly triple that of the town's official population, including the communities of Branscomb, Bell Springs, and Spy Rock. Much like the old days, Laytonville is an "outpost" for rural-dwellers in Northern Mendocino County.

With the planned Highway 101 bypass of Willits -- just 22 miles south of Laytonville



*Figure 1-1 Even in 1930, Laytonville has served as a central gathering place for people in the area.*



*Figure 1-2 Laytonville's historic*

-- Laytonville and Hopland (approximately 60 miles south) will have the only two central business districts located directly on Highway 101 for an approximate 300-mile stretch of highway, between the San Francisco Bay Area and Eureka.

### 1. The Project and Plan Area

This project focuses on community input collected during a week-long charrette held May 17 – 24, 2007 in Laytonville. A charrette is a series of interactive public events that spans several days or more and culminates in a vision or design.

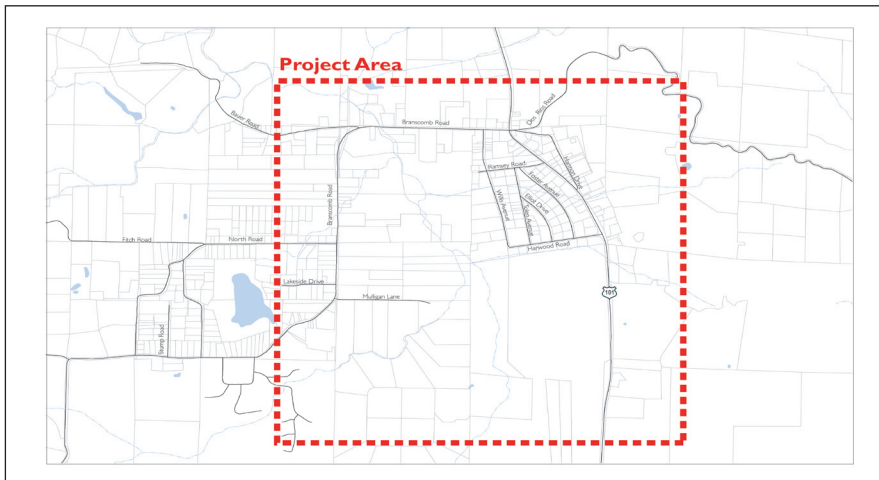


Figure 1-3 Project Area

The Plan Area that is the focus of this report includes downtown Laytonville, bounded by Boomer's Bar & Grill to the north, Long Valley Lumber to the south, Harmon Drive to the east and Willis Avenue to the west. It also includes Branscomb Road from Highway 101 to the Laytonville Rancheria because of its opportunity to create better linkages between the Rancheria, neighborhoods along Branscomb Road, Laytonville High School, and the downtown area.

The project was made possible through a Caltrans Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant received by the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) in partnership with the non-profit Local Government Commission (LGC) and the Laytonville Area Municipal Advisory Council (LAMAC). Matching funds were provided by MCOG and residents, businesses, and community organizations in Laytonville. The LGC is a Sacramento-based non-profit organization that works with communities, agencies and elected leaders to create healthy, walkable, and resource-efficient communities. The LAMAC is the Board-of-Supervisors-appointed body that represents Laytonville community issues and makes recommendations to Mendocino County government and State agencies.

In collaboration with the MCOG and the LAMAC, the LGC assembled a skilled consultant team through a competitive process to conduct charrette activities and prepare the recommendations and designs presented in this report. Team members included the planning firm Design, Community & Environment, traffic calming and engineering firm Fehr & Peers, and a planner and urban designer from the Local Government Commission. The design team provided technical input to the community and government agencies during the May 2007 design charrette.

## **2. Collaboration & Previous Planning Efforts**

This planning project builds on the *Laytonville Community Action Plan* (1999), the *Laytonville Downtown Development Plan* (2001), and the Laytonville Area Municipal Advisory Council's (LAMAC) *Community Planning Principles* (2004). The recommendations and plans in this report are consistent with previous planning efforts – in fact the reader will see many of the same community needs represented here: community gathering space, street trees, beautification, public restroom, and waste water treatment facilities. While there is continuity with previous planning efforts, this community planning project involved a first-time collaboration with Caltrans, MCOG, Mendocino County Department of

Transportation, the Mendocino County Planning Team, the LAMAC and the LGC.

An Advisory Committee consisting of community members and local government staff was assembled to guide the development of this project. The volunteer Advisory Committee provided technical information to the project team, acted as the “eyes and ears” of the community, and was instrumental in organizing the charrette.

## **3. Current Transportation Projects**

Multiple state and county transportation projects are nearing construction in Laytonville's downtown. These projects will improve safety conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and motor-vehicle operators alike. This report includes mention of these planned improvements and identifies linkage gaps that will remain after construction. Recommendations of how to close these gaps can be found in Chapter 3.

### **a. Caltrans Safety Project and Transportation Enhancement**

Scheduled to begin construction in 2008, this safety project includes a vertical curve realignment at Branscomb/Dos Rios Rd and Highway 101. The grade on the east side of the highway at the Laytonville Garage

will be lowered several feet to improve visibility. Intersection improvements will include curb, gutter, five-foot shoulders, eight-foot sidewalks, street trees and decorative pedestrian-scaled lighting. At the community's request, bicycle racks and hitching posts for horses will be provided.

#### b. Willis Avenue Improvements

Mendocino County Department of Transportation (DOT) is sponsoring a sidewalk project along Willis Avenue from the bus stop at the Middle School to Branscomb Road. The project will provide safer crossings and routes in between the Middle School and High School facilities.

#### c. Safe Routes to School

County DOT, in coordination with the Laytonville Unified School District, has received state Safe Routes to School funds to improve the informal foot trail along Branscomb Road from the High School to the Rancheria. Specific design recommendations for this Safe Routes to School project were prepared through this planning project, and recommended to Mendocino County DOT by the LAMAC; they are included in Chapter 3 and the Appendix of this report.

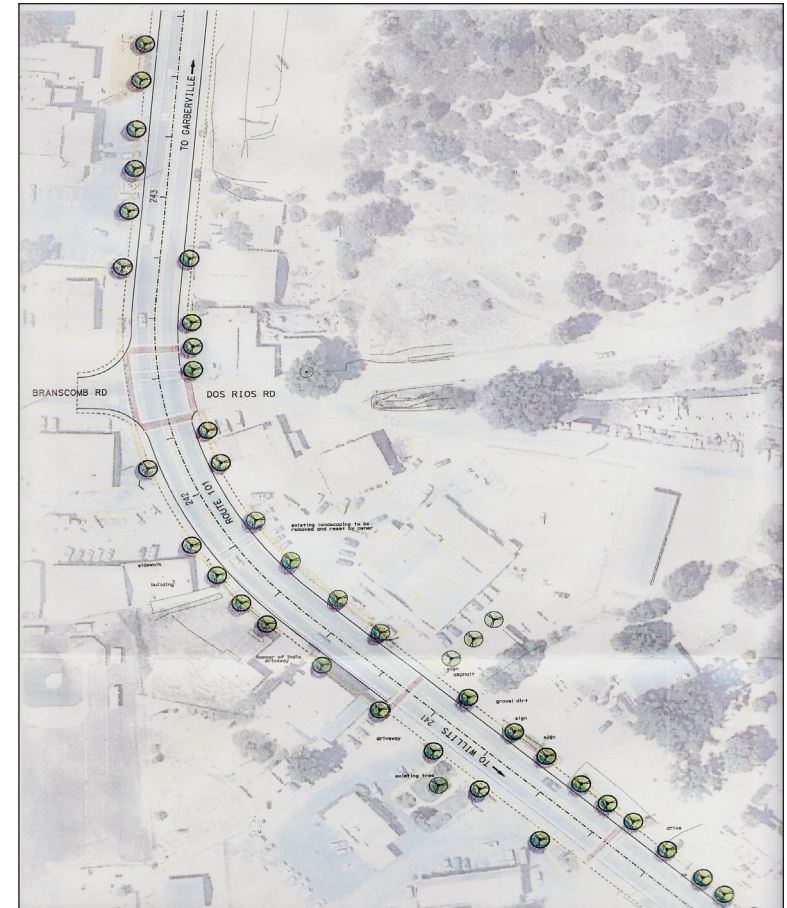


Figure 1-5 The Caltrans Safety Project includes sidewalks, street trees, crosswalk improvements, and lighting.

## B. Community Engagement

### 1. The Laytonville Design Fair

With the guidance of the Advisory Committee, the Local Government Commission organized a public design charrette process to provide guidance on the charrette process. This included a multi-day series of focus group meetings, presentations and workshops that engaged residents, businesses, youth, seniors, Cahto Tribal members, community organizations and local government in a variety of activities designed to elicit their concerns and suggestions, provide information about possible solutions, and foster collaborative



Figure 1-6 Youth discussed their desires for a skate park, pool, arcade, and better trail systems.

development of a community vision. Bruce Brubaker of Design, Community and Environment facilitated the meetings and charrette. Other members of the design team provided direction and prepared plan drawings based on community and local agency input.

Five focus group meetings were conducted on May 17th and 18th, 2007 in advance of the charrette. Members of the design team and Caltrans staff met with five groups: community service providers, seniors, downtown business owners, youth and Cahto Tribal members to hear input from a variety of specific interests. Notes from these focus groups are included in the Appendix.

The public events kicked off with a Saturday night opening town meeting, featuring a “burrito bar” prepared by Marcela Lopez and family, and spon-



Figure 1-7 Seniors spoke of the need for more recreation facilities and trails.



Figure 1-8 Community service providers shared their ideas and concerns.



Figure 1-9 Tribal members showed how the historic Coyote Trail.



Figure 1-10 The High School Rock and Roll bands played their tunes.



Figure 1-12 Community members shared their ideas



Figure 1-11 Community members voted on priorities

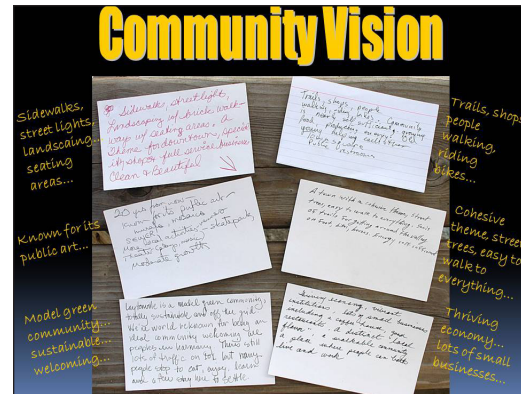


Figure 1-13 Opening presentation

sored by Geiger’s Long Valley Market and Gravier’s Chevron. Over 160 people attended the opening presentation to share their vision and values. During the opening presentation, participants viewed a presentation that showed existing conditions and some potential solutions used in other communities.

A “walking audit” of the plan area was conducted on Sunday morning. Over 50 people met at the Post Office and divided into one of four audits that looked at issues in the downtown area from a pedestrian perspective. Common issues that were identified were the excessive speed of traffic, lack of sidewalks and safe crosswalks, and the intersection of Branscomb/

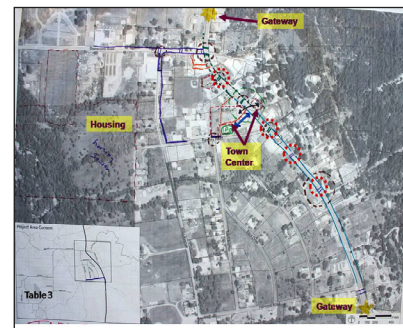
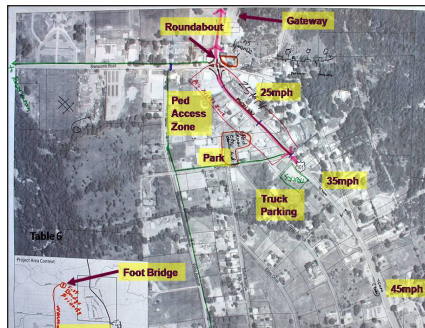
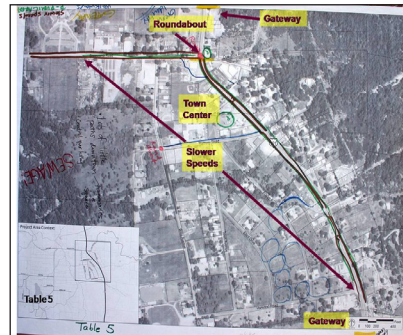
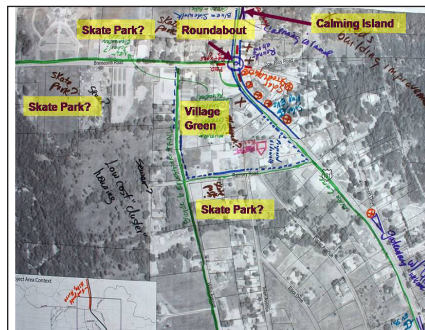
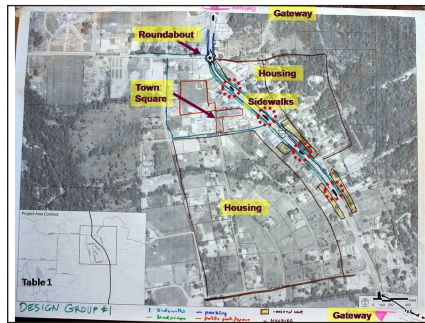


Figure 1-14 Visions for Laytonville Figure

Dios Rios Road and Highway 101. One audit group walked the entire length of the trail along Branscomb Road and developed community recommendations for the Safe Routes to School walkway that will be constructed by the County.



Figures 1-15 through 1-17 Walking Audits



(Figures 1-18 through 1-25)

On Sunday afternoon, participants gathered at Harwood Hall for “community design tables”. Working in groups, each table drew plans for the future of Laytonville.



Utilizing Albert's storefront as a design studio, the design team developed recommendations and plans throughout the period based on public input, field checks, and meetings with land-owners, Caltrans, MCOG and County Planning and DOT staff.

Preliminary recommendations were presented to a meeting of over 60 people at the closing presentation on Thursday, May 24. Participants added closing comments, which included:

- Clarify and reduce the building setback on Highway 101 (currently 80')



Figure 1-26 Open House



Figure 1-27 Albert's Studio

- Include solar panels in the design guidelines, and
- Identify County right-of-way on Branscomb Road.

By a show of hands, participants indicated unanimous support for the LAMAC using the design guidelines in Chapter 7 of this report as a framework for recommending new projects. Three waste-water treatment alternative concepts were presented (individual septic, decentralized systems, centralized sewer) and by a show of hands, a supermajority of participants indicated their preference for the decentralized option.