

Changes in the Downtown Prepare for Vision of the Future

(DOWNTOWN, from Page 1) with a desire to retain the area's identity as the social and economic heart of the City.

Envisioned is a dynamic pedestrian oriented area with residents coming in to shop, deal with City Hall or avail themselves of entertainment and dining opportunities.

Making that Plan a reality, however, requires a complex strategy and effort by the City, Redevelopment Agency, landowners, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, and the community, according to Redevelopment Manager Gina Rozenski.

Over the past year City staff has been crafting and implementing an action plan to bring about both subtle and significant improvements under the City's and Agency's control, says Rozenski.

"One of the largest misconceptions about the Specific Plan is that the changes in the Downtown are completely in the City and Agency's purview," she says. "The vast majority of the property in the Downtown is in private ownership, so we've been working diligently to help 'create the conditions' that encourage new private investment and development."

Some of those conditions include short-term enhancements:

- The City's Public Works department has repainted all of the decorative street lights and replaced the heads with more ornate lighting, that include the letter "B" as an insignia.
- Trees lining Oak and First Streets have been trimmed to better showcase these fixtures, as well as in preparation for new tree lighting expected to be installed in late winter.
- Public Works is replacing benches and trash receptacles with more attractive elements.
- The Parks and Recreation Department is planning to install additional tree and landscape lighting in City Park to help connect the Downtown core with civic center activities.
- A more vibrant floral palette is be-



Decorative streetlights have new, ornate heads with the letter "B" as an insignia.

ing planted throughout the Downtown.

All of the improvements are being funded by the Redevelopment Agency.

In addition to this facelift, City staff has been working to address parking concerns for Downtown merchants and customers.

Rozenski says that the City is constructing a surface parking lot on Chestnut and Brentwood Boulevard at the old police station site, which will add 33

spaces. This is in addition to 20 spaces that have been added elsewhere through street modifications.

The City has instituted a new parking permit program in the Downtown to ensure that merchants have available off street parking.

Rozenski says that the shorter-term fixes help the City set the stage for larger projects in the next three to five years, including new streetscape improvements, such as new street furniture, new street trees and tree lights, gateway monuments and arches, special sidewalk and asphalt treatment, kiosks, and clock towers.

These design elements need to coordinate well with the design plans for Civic Core and City Park areas, and the installation of these design elements must be phased with Downtown water and sewer improvements to minimize disruption.

"The long-term economic vitality of the Downtown depends greatly on our ability to support and complement the growth and change of the area through a wide net of cooperation," says Rozenski. "We look forward to establishing these great partnerships to revitalize, enhance, and preserve our Downtown district."

Facelifts for Three Busy Roadways to Start

Three heavily traveled roads are scheduled for an approximately \$3.7 million facelift starting this spring.

Scheduled for widening from two lanes to four are Brentwood Boulevard-Central, Sand Creek Road and Walnut Boulevard.

Preliminary work in the form of relocating utility poles and tree removal along an 800-foot stretch of Brentwood Boulevard between Central Boulevard and Village Drive started last fall, says Senior Civil Engineer Anthony Salam.

The estimated \$1.1 million project will go to bid early this year and construction is expected to begin in spring. Drivers in the area can expect some delays during construction.

The final leg of Sand Creek Road

will be widened from the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to O'Hara Avenue. This will complete the widening of Sand Creek Road to an arterial with two lanes in each direction, says Senior Associate Engineer Brian Bornstein. Cost of that project is estimated at \$800,000. Currently, Sand Creek Road is built out from Highway 4 to Fairview Avenue except for this segment.

Widening Walnut Boulevard, an approximately \$2 million project, is expected to go to bid early this year, and construction is expected to begin in late spring or early summer, Bornstein says. Improvements will include medians, sidewalks and a bike lane in each direction. Utility improvements were completed in an earlier phase.