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Traffic Way Conceptual Plan

Arroyo Grande, California

In this project, the undergraduate second-year design class proposed an urban design project for Traffic Way, a commercial corridor in the City of Arroyo Grande, California. The area is a “jumble” of uses, architectural styles, and vacant lots, and the project concentrated on infill development and area improvements, such as pedestrian-oriented streetscaping.

To jump start new development and act as a catalyst for new projects, the City of Arroyo Grande charged the second year design class (CRP 203: Intermediate Environmental Design) of the CRP Department at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, to investigate how the area could change over the course of the next years. Lead by instructors Zeljka Howard and Vicente del Rio, the team worked in close cooperation and collaboration with City staff to generate a concept plan for the project area.

The Traffic Way area is characterized by a mix of uses, including professional offices, specialty shops, auto service yards, auto dealerships, a post office, restaurants, a new strip mall, and a fire station. In its current form, Traffic Way does not lend itself to pedestrian oriented development, as the City General Plan outlines. Its overall character lacks any link to the adjacent Arroyo Grande Village, the historic main commercial corridor of the community; rather Arroyo Grande Creek provides an abrupt disconnect between the two areas.

Some good features within the Area include a historical museum, the Arroyo Grande Creek, and the Bridge Street Bridge, which could be utilized and revitalized in a way to make them more attractive to users. The site is directly adjacent to U.S. Highway 101, the major north-south artery for the region.

The class developed two conceptual plans with design guidelines in response to short and long range development opportunities. The design and concept plan development process included field surveys visual preference surveys, and public hearings, so that the views and concerns of the public on how development within the project area should occur could be translated into the design.

The short range proposal looked at how the area may develop over the next 15 years and proposes retaining the existing automobile dealerships with some modest changes. The central feature of the plan is a pocket park in the “island” between Station Way and Traffic Way. It is accessed via several *paseos*, one of which connects to and

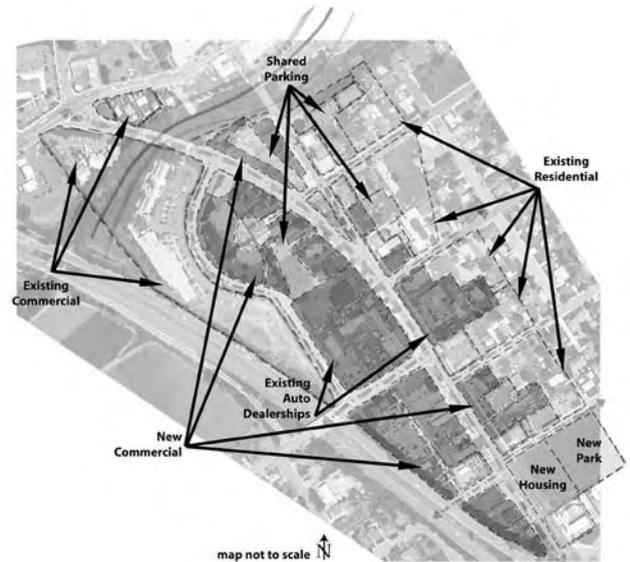
is set along the creek to incorporate the park into our plan. The short range design seeks the creation of a sense of place by integrating the existing car dealerships, by enhancing transitions with surrounding areas, and by promoting safe and efficient pedestrian-friendly circulation. As a reference to the car dealerships, the design proposes the use of features that are reminiscent of the 1950s - like flat roofs with bold signage and awnings. A unifying streetscape through special street lamps, wood benches, and landscaping will help to tie the street environment together. All vacant lots are to be developed for commercial and mixed uses in order to take advantage of the nearby thriving Village economy. Encouraging commercial growth in an already successful retail district will result in increased revenue for the city.

The long-range conceptual plan proposes to redefine the Traffic Way area with a new image and character over the a period of twenty to thirty years. This will happen with the relocation of the existing auto dealerships to a different location within the city, making available two sizeable lots. The central location in which they currently reside would



Students hard at work crafting the plan. (Photo: CRP 203)

be developed into a mixed-use promenade, promoting both vehicular and pedestrian inflow from all major nodes in the city. The final plan provides for retail and mixed-use areas suited for a pedestrian business environment, with the option of offices or residential uses on the second story. Small lot sizes would promote small-scale development, further enhancing the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Along these lines, the plan calls for minimizing and staggering setback distances to bring buildings close to the sidewalk to create a pleasing aesthetic view and maintain pedestrian interest. Finally, the long range plan presents a vision for a dramatically different Traffic Way -one that achieves its goals of attracting pedestrian usage and activities, accommodating all modes of transportation, creating a sense of place, and attracting compatible and complementary uses in the immediate surroundings.



Top: Short Range Concept Plan;
Bottom: Long Range Concept Plan



Top: Rendering of new development along Traffic Way;
Bottom: Computer model of the Long Range Concept Plan

