

Project Identity and Location:

Big Bear Lake Village Streetscape Design, City of Big Bear Lake, CA

Purpose of Project: The purpose of the landscape improvements to the Big Bear Lake Village (the Village) was to create a more livable, inviting, and pedestrian-friendly place for visitors and residents to enjoy the commercial core of downtown. The streetscape improvements are the first steps to developing the pedestrian improvements identified and adopted in the Big Bear Village Specific Plan. The improvements included several blocks along Village Drive and Pine Knot Avenue. The City wanted to provide a new look for the Village which includes new sidewalks, street furnishings, mid-block crosswalks, bike access and parking, new street lighting, public art, new street trees and plantings, and improvements to paseos, public gathering areas, and transit stops. The new streetscape also includes public spaces with fire rings to extend evening use where people can relax in the Village core. In addition to the streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities, plans were developed to connect the Knickerbocker Trail to the heart of the Village. The Knickerbocker Trail (currently under construction) is a multiuse path parallel to the Pine Knot Avenue and provides connectivity to downtown parking areas, adjacent neighborhoods, and recreation trails leading to the Big Bear Lake waterfront.

Livable Goals:

- Beautify and enhance the scenic mountain setting of the Big Bear Lake Village commercial core.
- Create a more livable and inviting setting for residents and visitors of Big Bear Lake Village to encourage walking and biking as healthy alternatives to access the Village.

Connectivity Goals:

- Provide access for people of all ages and abilities for multimodal access to the Village from residential areas and nearby hotels.
- Provide facilities that connect local and regional bike and pedestrian networks to residential, tourist, and employment centers.

The project design process included public outreach with residents and critical stakeholders. The design concepts reflected the program goals from the Big Bear Lake Village Specific Plan, calling for better pedestrian access to the commercial core and creating a walkable environment with access to visitor-serving amenities and the Big Bear Lake waterfront.

Role of Landscape Architect: Our firm collaborated closely with the merchants, business owners, hotel resorts, residents, and various City departments to help craft the vision for the Village. The project involved several public workshops and design charettes to gain input from the community and various stakeholders to formulate the design elements.

A central challenge for the landscape architect was finding consensus amongst the various merchants and stakeholders to minimize the impacts to their businesses, both in the design elements and during construction.

Significance: The successful design of safer pedestrian and bike access along with multiple access opportunities to the Village core ensures the economic vitality of providing a four-season destination to this important mountain town. In addition to revitalizing the streetscape and pedestrian environment, enhancing the multimodal choices of arriving by bus, bike, and walking provides healthy alternatives for citizens, tourists, and the local workforce to access the Village.

- **Special Factors:** At an elevation of roughly 6,800 feet above sea level, the city of Big Bear Lake has to deal with snow in the winter months. The snow in the downtown needs to be plowed and removed continuously in the winter to provide walkability. Two design solutions helped with the challenges of snow and ice. One design solution included rolled curbs so snowplows can push and remove snow without damaging the curb and gutter with their blades. The other design solution involved the City installing heated sidewalks on the south side of Village Drive to melt the ice that builds up due to long, building shadows in mid-winter. The streetscape and pedestrian improvements will also be supported by this summer's completion of the Knickerbocker Trail which connects the Village center to Veteran's Park and the Big Bear Lake waterfront. The Knickerbocker Trail provides additional alternatives for residents and visitors to access both the commercial and retail core and recreation facilities close to town.

The Big Bear Lake Village Streetscape Design completes the City's first commitment to the Specific Plan improvements for their downtown. This project amenities provide locals and visitors with a more walkable community core and with trees and landscaped areas that beautify the mountain setting of this unique area in Southern California.