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GARY WARREN/Monitor

A walkable downtown

◆ Residents push for a more pedestrian-friendly Central Avenue

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Working to enhance pedestrian safety and improve the walkability of downtown Los Alamos, residents are enlisting county support to correct accessibility issues on Central Avenue.

About 15 members of the public and county staff took a stroll along the downtown traffic artery Wednesday afternoon to identify problem areas, many of which do not comply with federal requirements.

Wendy Swanson of LA Walks, a local pedestrian advocacy group, said county decision-makers were invited to attend so that they may "get a feel" for what issues face pedestrians and illustrate problems and recommend solutions.

"We want safe and comfortable walking areas," Swanson said. "We want people to be encouraged to walk to shopping areas and we want to help promote local stores."

Swanson said the organization would like to see new ADA-compliant crosswalks constructed in the near future, rather than correcting the crossings simultaneously with the Bradbury Row project.

"We want this to be funded before the Bradbury development," Swanson said.

June Ryti runs her errands and carries out other tasks on a motorized scooter. In addition to having to dodge the fast-moving traffic, she said she also must carefully maneuver driveways and other areas that are not properly designed.

"There are many tilted sidewalks and when I cross them, I'm afraid of tipping over," she said. "Slopes on

driveways are not at the correct grade and I cannot travel along Trinity (Drive) at all because it is too tilted."

As LA Walks advocate Dave Collins pushed Councilor Nona Bowman in a wheelchair, he called attention to the narrowness of the sidewalks.

"We'd like to eventually get the street redesigned and make wider sidewalks," Collins said.

Walking her son in a stroller, resident Anja Blackadar said she would like to see additional traffic-calming measures implemented along Central Avenue.

"What concerns me is the people who speed," Blackadar said. "It makes me very nervous. Traffic devices to slow down drivers would need to be strongly enforced."

Another pedestrian, who crosses Central Avenue on a daily basis on his way to work, said nine out of 10 motorists do not brake for him at crosswalks.

One primary measure that the group suggested involves constructing additional crosswalk "bulb-outs" that increases the visibility of pedestrians, slows traffic and reduces the amount of time a pedestrian is on the roadway, according to LA Walks.

After taking the walk with concerned residents, Council Chair Mike Wheeler said he is more aware of pedestrian concerns in the downtown area.

"I am a big supporter of walkability," he said. "It seems we have some work to do."

LA Walks found success June 2005 in securing \$14,000 in grant money to help fund an adequate crosswalk with bulb-outs on Central near Smith's Grocery Store. Funding for an identical crossing near the Blue Window Bistro, an \$18,000 seed money grant proposal, is currently pending.

For more information on LA Walks, visit www.lawalks.org.

OUT FOR A STROLL Members of LA Walks, county leaders and the public examine a tilted driveway on Wednesday afternoon as part of a short walk to identify areas that hinder pedestrian access along Central Avenue.