

Community Meeting Regarding Proposed Parking Lot Purchase

August 30, 2017

The Revitalization Committee, now known as the Niwot Future League, which is an *ad hoc* committee of the Niwot Local Improvement District, held a community meeting at the Left Hand Grange in Niwot on Wednesday, August 30, with approximately 30 people attending.

Notice of the meeting was given through an announcement in the Left Hand Valley Courier as well as at the Niwot Business Association meeting on August 8, and by written notices hand-delivered to all residences on Murray Street north of 2nd Avenue, as well as residences along 3rd Avenue, 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue west of Franklin Street. Some residents who were contacted by NFL members Biff Warren and Cotton Burden expressed support for the proposal, some objected to it, and others simply acknowledged the meeting date.

NFL member Biff Warren introduced the proposed property purchase at the meeting, and described the property, which is a long narrow strip of land approximately 2 acres in size, lying north of the Excel Electric and My Mom's Pies-occupied property, and west of Murray Street, between approximately 3rd Avenue and extending northward slightly beyond 5th Avenue. The property is currently owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF), and Warren indicated that the Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee (LID) had recommended approval of the purchase of the property at a purchase price of \$170,000. Warren also indicated that the business community had been attempting to find and acquire a suitable site for public parking to serve the downtown area for at least the past 11 years.

NFL member Tony Santelli described the benefits of a vibrant business community to the entire community. NFL member Cotton Burden described the need for a "critical mass" of businesses in Old Town Niwot necessary for the success of the business district, and the need for adequate parking for customers and employees of businesses. NFL member Chuck Klueber presented information about proposed plans for a public parking lot on the southernmost 306 feet of the property, with a drawing showing 50 parking spaces and an artist's conception of how the lot would look after screening with vegetation.

Warren gave a history of the creation of a Transportation and Connectivity Study, conducted by Boulder County with input from residents, business owners, consultants and county staff. He noted that the threshold established which would trigger the exploration of a site for a public parking lot to serve the downtown businesses had been met and that future studies were expected to meet the threshold for constructing a parking lot. He also noted other properties near downtown Niwot which had been investigated and rejected for various reasons. He also noted that while the parking lot would provide additional parking for events, the primary purpose was to open up parking in Old Town for business customers.

Several members of the audience spoke, some in support of the proposal, some who objected to it, and several who asked for more information. The NFL asked for input on potential uses for the remainder of the property and invited other suggestions with respect to the proposed parking lot.

Comments included:

- The parking lot will ruin the view to the west for houses along Murray Street.
- Why not buy the Excel Electric building and turn it into a parking lot?
- A parking lot will increase traffic through the residential neighborhood.
- A parking lot will lower property values in the residential area.
- A parking lot will raise property values and property taxes in the residential area, imposing a hardship on current residents.
- What else could be allowed if the zoning is changed?
- A wildlife survey should be done on the property.
- Residents have mowed the property for the railroad for 50 years.
- The property should be left as it is.
- Traffic along 5th Avenue leading to Murray Street goes too fast, and 5th Avenue and Franklin Street should be realigned to slow down motorists.
- People do not park on the side streets of Old Town except during events.
- People park down Murray Street when there is a need for overflow parking from the businesses.
- Why can't they use the Park & Ride in the middle of the Diagonal for parking?
- If you add 50 spaces now, how do we know you won't add another 50 spaces later?

Suggestions for the proposed parking lot design and uses for the rest of the property included:

- Have only one entrance and exit to the parking lot on the south end.
- Do not put up a fence to screen the parking lot – just bushes.
- Lower the parking lot slightly so that cars will not be visible.
- Make the surface porous, but do not use material that will create dust.
- Do not install tall lights and make the lights downward directed.
- Leave the rest of the site as it is – just a vacant field.
- Add signage at the entrance/exit.
- Add a cinder pathway along Murray Street where the parking lot is.
- Do not add curbs and gutter to Murray Street.

The NFL members responded to the comments and suggestions, thanked the audience for participating, and agreed to consider the suggestions presented. Mark Ruzzin, LID liaison to the Boulder County Commissioners, agreed to report to the Commissioners concerning the meeting. The meeting was adjourned.