

Niwot LID approves funding for Cottonwood Park West open space

By Jocelyn Rowley Sports@lhvc.com Aug 18, 2017

The Niwot LID Advisory Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 1, and reviewed the budget reports prepared by county liaison Pete Salas and LID treasurer Harris Faberman. According to their figures, the LID has disbursed just over \$41,753 in expenses so far this year and has committed to spend another \$64,839, not counting the pending application, leaving about \$26,408 in the budget for the year.

This does not include the \$192,025 recommended for approval last month for the purchase of land adjacent to the railroad tracks for a future parking lot. Those funds would come out of the LID's capital reserve account, which has a current balance of \$250,895.

The evening's sole funding request came from Chuck Klueber, appearing on behalf of the Niwot Business Association (NBA) streetscapes committee. Klueber submitted a request for \$10,950 to help fund the development of a "community area" on the southwest corner of 79th Street and Niwot Road, in the open space area adjacent to the Cottonwood Park West neighborhood.

This area has been targeted for development by the NBA in an effort to provide "connectivity" between Niwot's two main business areas, Old Town and Cottonwood Square. Since visitors to Niwot are not always aware that there are two business districts in town, creating an attraction within walking distance of both has been a long time goal. Until now, however, they have been unable to come to an agreement with the property owner, Cottonwood Park West Homeowner's Association (HOA).

"We've been going at this thing for a lot of years," said Tony Santelli, LID member and president of the NBA. "Now we have a Cottonwood West homeowner's leadership team that's really made a dramatic turnaround. We're presenting this thing very enthusiastically, because it's connectivity squared. There's a lot of excitement behind it."

Appearing with Klueber were Nicholas Whittaker and Chester Shans from the Cottonwood Park West HOA. Whittaker, the board's new president, explained that the current HOA leadership team, hoping to be a "better steward of the space, as well as a better neighbor" reached out to Klueber last year to finally put a development plan in motion.

"We've discussed this corner for years, and we just seemed to go in circles," said Shans, who credited Whittaker's leadership for the HOA's newfound interest in the space. "He's really focused in on trying to get something that's sustainable for the whole community, something that will help tie the downtown areas together, and I think it's a really great project."

Drawings for the proposed "community area" provided by Klueber show two landscaped seating spaces in an excavated berm with a supporting wall, surrounded by trees, low profile shrubs, and other greenery. A commercial quality metal park bench will sit in the east bed, while two left hand chairs will sit in the west.

Plans for future connectivity enhancements in the space, including the informational kiosks and a possible art installation, are under consideration.

"One of the things we're really interested in is not having just a one-time engagement with the community or a one-off project," said Whittaker. "What I'm interested in is figuring out steps or stages so this larger project can grow over time and create more of a community feel."

The project has garnered significant support around town, and a number of other Niwot organizations are lending their monetary or material assistance. The Niwot Community Association (NCA) is donating the bench, while Osmosis Art and Architecture provided landscape design and renderings. The Rotary is donating \$600 towards the planting of a tree, and they have also pledged volunteer labor once construction starts.

The HOA is also contributing \$2,000 towards the project, which is being matched by the NBA. Boulder County Development Grants will provide an additional \$4,650. Overall, LID funds will cover about half of the project's expected costs of \$20,200.

"To me, that's one of the most encouraging pieces of the whole proposal," said LID co-chair Laura Skaggs during the discussion following Klueber's presentation. "It is the whole community coming together. How can we resist that?"

They couldn't. The request was approved unanimously, and construction is slated to begin early to mid-fall.

Salas updated the committee on the search for a new Economic Development Director (EDD). The formal Request for Proposal (RFP) announcing the opening was posted by Boulder County on July 13, and so far there have been three responses. The Niwot Revitalization committee has reviewed the candidates and will start interviewing on Aug. 8, with the aim of having the position staffed by Sep. 1.

Kathy Koehler of the Niwot Community Association (NCA) presented a brief report on Niwot's memorable 4th of July celebration, which featured an appearance by U.S. Supreme Court Justice and former area resident Neil Gorsuch. She also submitted documentation of the event's advertising and promotional expenses (\$1,361), which the LID agreed to fund back in May.

Salas then discussed the upcoming joint meeting between the LID and the Boulder County Commissioners, which was held August 7 at the Grange. Among the agenda items were the "State of Niwot," an update on the search for a new EDD, and the proposed future parking lot.

The Committee will meet next at 7 p.m. on Sept. 5 at the Mountain View Fire Station.