

Niwot residents voice concerns over development moratorium

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A Boulder County official told about 100 people crammed inside Niwot's Left Hand Grange No. 9 on Wednesday evening that a temporary moratorium on development was enacted so that residents can keep the community they want.

"What we have here is about two blocks of development," said Boulder County Land Use Department Director Dale Case. "It's a small place that's very special to a lot of people ... It's not something we build out of a box."

Many of the people who came to the meeting were unhappy with what they felt was a lack of communication by the county, including the notification of the meeting and the moratorium itself.

The Boulder County Board of County Commissioners earlier this year enacted a moratorium on the processing of any new development applications in the Niwot Rural Community District which includes the row of businesses on Second Avenue in Niwot. The moratorium expires in March, and a public hearing on the matter is scheduled later this month.

County documents provided at the meeting indicate that officials enacted the moratorium so that any future development can be reviewed under clear criteria that can be applied "consistently and fairly" and reflect the "needs and desires of the community."

The current regulations date to the early 1990s and have not been substantially updated for almost a decade.

Attendees were asked to write ideas down on cards and on sheets of paper several easels set up around the room that asked for participants' input regarding the desired character of the area, types of buildings and types of developments.

Niwot resident Elaine C. Erb quickly walked to one of the easels to write down her thoughts. She said that she has lived in Niwot for 30 years and likes the greater variety of businesses that exist now as opposed to when she first moved to the area.

"We have a bit of an art scene," Erb said. "We have a nice First Friday. We have two coffee shops."

Asked what she doesn't want to see happen with regard to future development in Niwot, Erb said that she didn't really want to see any "five story buildings."

She said that Niwot already possesses a quality that developers try to implement in newer communities called "new urbanism." She gave Prospect New Town in south Longmont — a mixed use development with residences and businesses all in a small area — as an example.

"We walk to the bank," she said. "We walk to the post office. We walk to the liquor store. I don't have a cat right now, but I used to walk to the feed store. We have a lot of crucial amenities."

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