A Connecticut resident who is seeking county land use approval to allow a marijuana grow and retail center on his Niwot property says he is moving forward with the process but will continue to work with the community.

The process

Ernie and Callie Craumer have applied for a land-use permit for a marijuana grow and retail facility in Niwot. Here is the process for such applications.

1. Land Use Department

Department holds pre-application conference and place applicant on wait list; applicant submits special use application once called in from the wait list; application reviewed by Land Use, referral agencies and public; Land Use drafts staff recommendation based on code analysis and input received.

2. Planning Commission

Hold public hearing to review the application and the Land Use recommendation (includes public comment); make recommendation to approve/deny application

3. County Commissioners

Hold public hearing to review the application and the Land Use staff and Planning Commission recommendations (includes public comment); make a decision to approve/deny application

4. If approved

Land Use Department works with the applicant to complete all post approval conditions; complete a development agreement which outlines the long term expectations and limitations for the development; may require other specific actions as determined to be necessary through the review and approval process; ensures long term compliance with approval.

5. Licensing process

Application is submitted to State of Colorado. State has significant process which includes background, security and financial checks. Application is submitted to Boulder County; process includes several steps including confirming that the property taxes have been paid, building inspection division, and several other agencies. Both are significant processes and are dependent on each other. If one is denied, the other will be denied. If one is approved and the other is denied, then the first will be revoked.

In turn, Niwot residents are not backing down in their opposition to his plans.

"We were not surprised by many of the concerns expressed in the meeting with the (Niwot Business Association) members but were disappointed that some of the pertinent issues were not broached and
discussed,” Ernie Craumer wrote in an email to the Times-Call this week. “We are planning to move ahead with our real estate project and have been in recent contact with the Niwot Community Association (NCA).”

On March 10, Craumer and his wife, Callie, met with members of the Niwot Business Association to talk about their plans for the vacant building at 6924 N. 79th St., a few blocks south of the community's downtown area. The two were met with harsh questions from NBA members and by more than 30 protesters outside the meeting.

Four days earlier, the Greenwich, Conn., residents had filed a land-use application with Boulder County to use the property a marijuana grow and retail facility. If they gain county approval, the Craumers intend to lease the property rather than operate a grow and retail operation themselves.

Craumer would not agree to a phone interview with the Times-Call.

Niwot resident David Weckerly last week sent an letter to the Craumers, which he posted on Facebook and emailed to other Niwot residents.

"As you contemplate moving forward on your proposed 'legal drug dealership' — now that the State of Colorado has approved such technically, but the Federal Government has not — I put forth the following to you: While technically what you are proposing may now be legal in this state, just as a Porn Shop may be legal, Niwot is not the place, especially not in our tiny wonderful downtown, the heart of our family community," Weckerly wrote.

"I will personally pull together every possible willing resident and supporter of Niwot to join my fight of your intended marijuana operation, including joining with the Niwot Business Association and Niwot Community Association, as each sees fit, to the fullest extent of the law," his letter continued. "I am hopeful that you immediately and officially withdraw your proposed business application now on record with Boulder County. Should you not withdraw, the fight is on, again to the fullest extent of the law."

But Niwot residents have no legal power to prevent the plan from moving forward.

"They can testify at hearings and write letters and let their thoughts be known. But ultimately it's the planning board and county commissioners," said Liz Donaghey, the marijuana licensing authority for Boulder County.

That process, from application to county approval, usually takes four to six months for a marijuana grow operation, she said.

When shown Weckerly's letter, Donaghey said that she hadn't seen a letter like that sent to a potential marijuana business owner.

"This isn't common practice," she said. "In the past when we have received applications we have not received these types of letters."

But a number of Niwot residents echo Weckerly's concerns.

"The letter ... shows the passion people in Niwot have for their families," said Kay Ingram, who has lived in Niwot for 10 years. "It doesn't fit in with the character of this community. We are all family oriented. It's just not the right location. There is plenty of space elsewhere in the county."

Niwot Community Association Vice President David Limbach is launching an online community survey this
"We want to quantify a few things," Limbach said of the survey, which will be up until April 8.

He said he is hoping to clear up any confusion or misconceptions about the proposed facility and will release his results at the April 15 NCA meeting.

Some residents say they don't care about lost tax revenue or jobs a grow facility and dispensary might create.

"The bottom line is we all want what is best for Niwot," said Sheila Perry, a resident of 22 years, small business owner, and parent to a 17-year-old daughter. "This business doesn't cater to families. It's not the right place for this. It will bring more crime to the area.

"Niwot is a bit like a secret," she said. "We moved here from Boulder because we thought it was a better place to raise a family."

The Craumers say they are planning more meetings with Niwot residents. Nothing has been scheduled yet.

"We will be meeting with their board (NCA) in the near future," Craumer said in his email. "We will continue to communicate with both the citizens and business members of the community and look forward to having our planning team of experts available to address any future questions or issues that arise."

**By the numbers**

Grows in Boulder County: 62

Grows in unincorporated Boulder County:

- Retail application, not in operation: 5
- Medical pre-existing- not licensed, but operating: 4
- Medical licensed: 7
- Retail licensed: 1
- Dual licensed: 3

Total number of all dispensaries in Boulder County (retail, medical and dual) - 41

Total number of dispensaries in unincorporated Boulder County:

- Licensed medical dispensary- 2