



# Niwot: Local Governance and Incorporation Overview

Community Town Hall

January 2026

# Thank you for coming!

- Please hold questions and comments.
- **The meeting is being live streamed.** If someone you know couldn't be here, please text them to go to [Niwot.Town](https://www.niwot.town) and find the Live Stream link under Town Hall No. 2.
- Presentation will be posted on [Niwot.Town](https://www.niwot.town).
- The Left Hand Valley Courier is running a series of articles about incorporation – visit [lhvc.com](https://www.lhvc.com) or look for links at [Niwot.Town](https://www.niwot.town).



Niwot.Town



# Overview

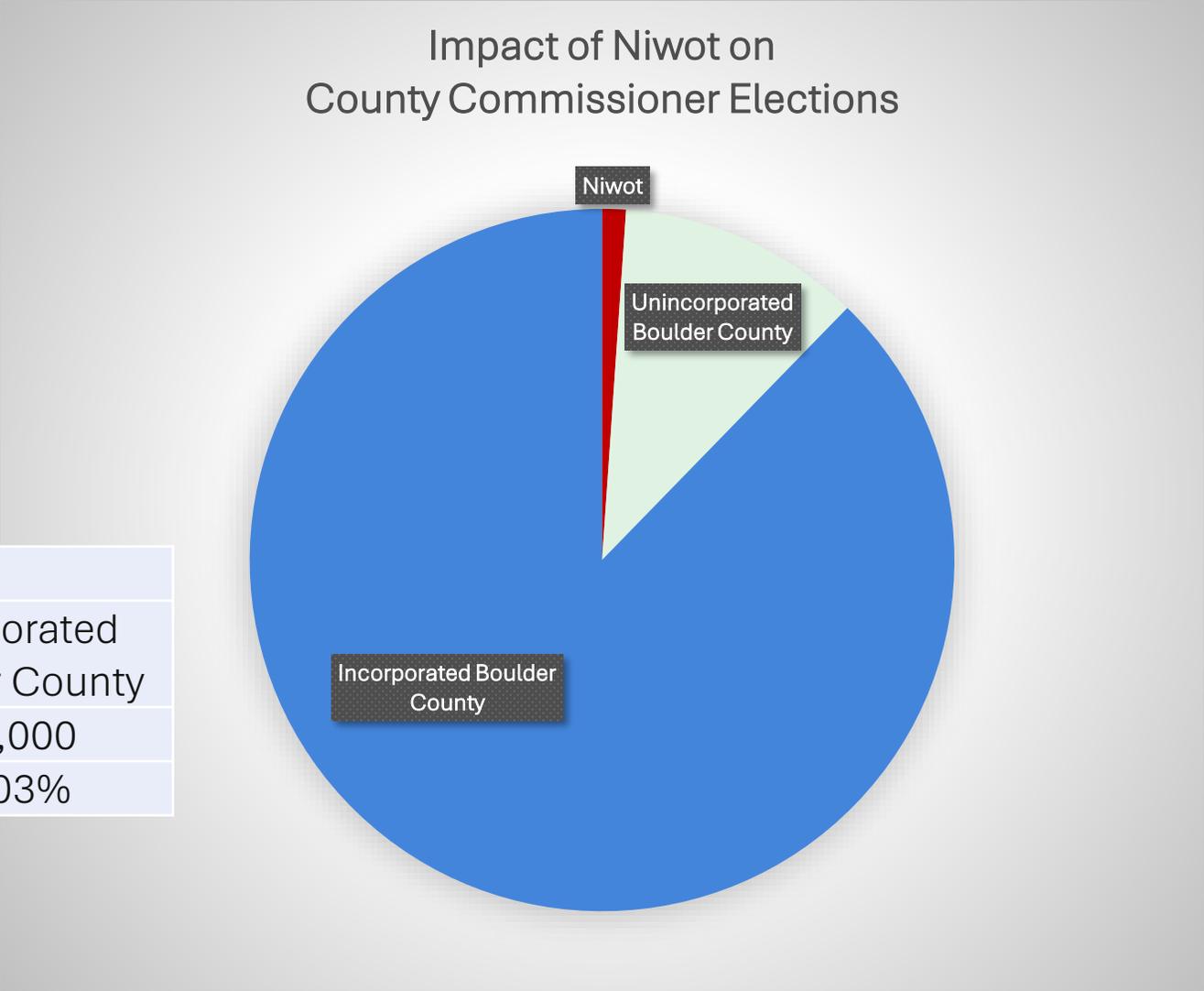
# The Core Problems

- **Roads**
  - County-owned; County has stated it will not repair → lowers property values
- **Land Use & Zoning**
  - County decisions affect home size, energy requirements, and project costs
- **Local Business Vitality**
  - Minimum wage set above nearby cities; local businesses are under pressure
- **Stewardship of Tax Dollars**
  - Taxes paid in Niwot leak to the County and neighboring municipalities

# Niwot Has No Voice in Electing Commissioners

County Commissioners are elected at-large by all Boulder County voters — Niwot cannot realistically elect one of its own.

Population Estimates as of 2024		
Niwot	Unincorporated Boulder County	Incorporated Boulder County
4,100	42,000	330,000
1.24%	12.73%	86.03%



# If Niwot Remains Unincorporated . . .

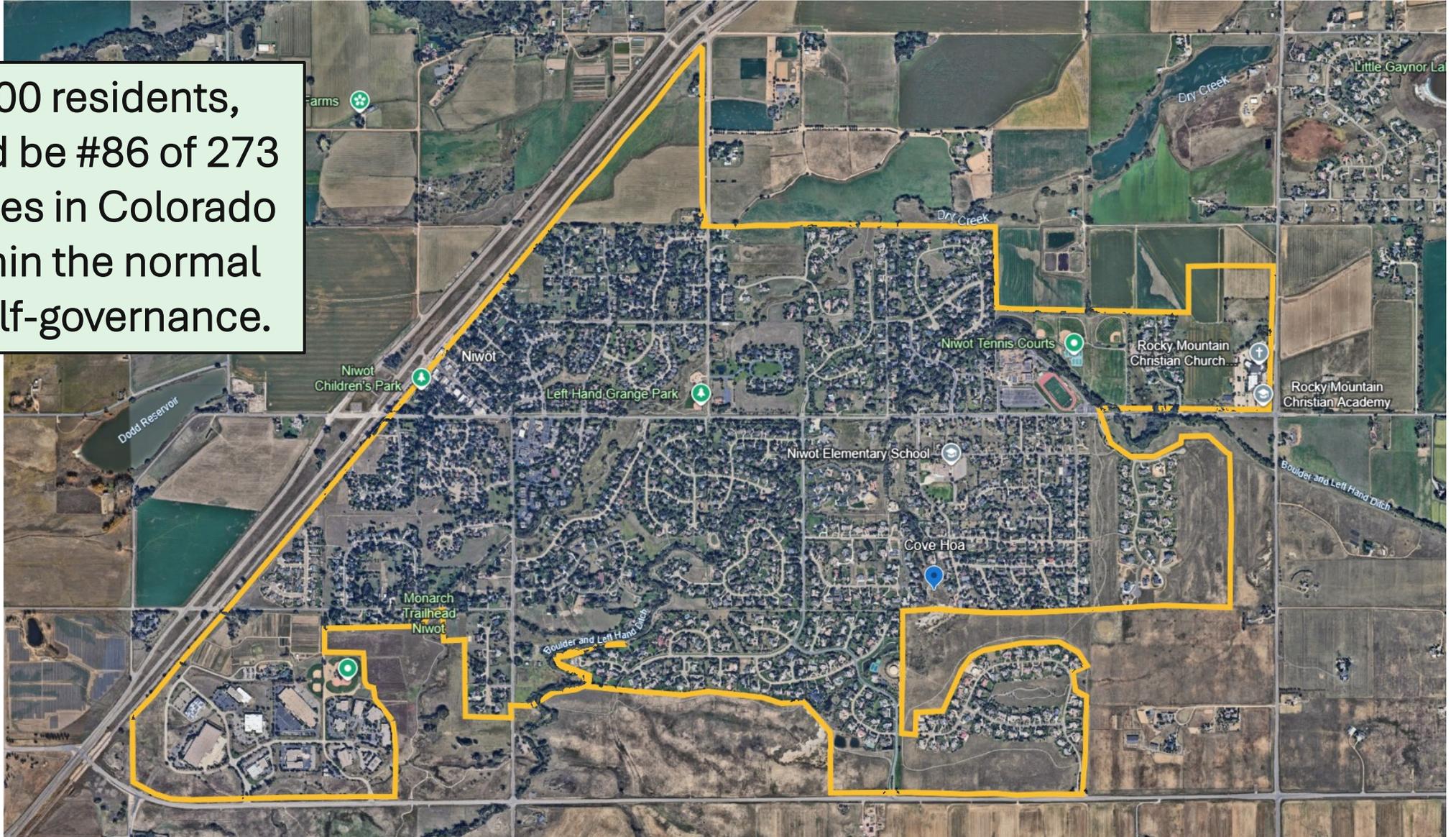
- Boulder County will make decisions for Niwot.
- Niwot will not have a seat at the table.
- Niwot will miss out on municipal revenue and grants.
- Sales tax paid online will leak to Longmont.
- Niwot will overpay for fire protection.

**If we are not part of the government, we are choosing to be governed by someone else.**



# Solution: Incorporate Niwot

With ~4,100 residents, Niwot would be #86 of 273 municipalities in Colorado — well within the normal range for self-governance.



# Town Makes the Decisions and Provides:

- Land Use and Zoning – policies, approving/denying developments, building permits
- Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services
- Public Safety and Law Enforcement
- Public Works – snow plowing, street sweeping, stormwater management
- Roads within Boundaries – maintenance and repair, sidewalks, crosswalks, signage
- Parks, Trails, and Recreation - if owned by municipality
- Code Enforcement – noise, parking, property maintenance
- Planning and Community Development – business regulations such as minimum wage
- Local Administration – Town Manager & Clerk, Records & Municipal Elections, Budget & Finance



**All other existing services provided by the county are still provided by the county**

# What Incorporation Changes — and What It Doesn't

## What Changes

- Local control over minimum wage
- Responsibility for roads and infrastructure
- Local control over land use and zoning
- Ability to set policies tailored to Niwot
- Keeping Niwot-generated revenue working for Niwot
- Service level agreements with:
  - Public Safety (Boulder County Sheriff)
  - Fire/EMS Department
  - Utilities (Xcel and Comcast)

## What Doesn't Change

- Deep culture of volunteerism
- Volunteer-run events and traditions
- Community-led priorities
- Small-town character and identity
- Surrounding open space

# Niwot and Boulder County: Complementary Roles

- County has said it will not oppose incorporation
- County staff confirmed cooperation on Intergovernmental Agreement process
- Timing is right: Boulder County must cut \$39M from its budget over next 3 years

Expect to get less from County, no matter what,  
including main artery road repairs

Niwot is worth protecting.  
This is how small towns stay strong: by taking  
responsibility for their own future.



# Feasibility Study

# Purpose and Steps in Feasibility Study

**Purpose: Determine revenue to ask voters to support to cover estimated expenses.**

1. Draw a territory boundary that meets legal requirements and makes sense.
2. **Estimate revenue**
  - Create database of properties in territory
  - Calculate property tax revenue at various mill levies
  - Estimate sales tax revenue at various %
  - Research other revenue sources
3. **Estimate expenses**
  - Inventory public infrastructure in territory
  - Research similar municipality budgets
  - Get estimates from possible service providers
  - Solicit preliminary bids from road contractors
4. Put it all together in a multi-year model, test different tax levels needed to cover costs, and seek community input on a reasonable balance. **Result is the “Pro Forma Budget”.**

Output of process is an “up to” **property tax mill levy and sales tax percent** included in the petition that is voted on in November. Everything else in the Pro Forma can be debated, researched further, and adjusted. Actual budget will be set by the Town Council. We’re showing feasibility but aren’t making decisions about how the Town will be run.

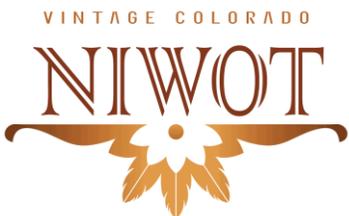


# Pro Forma Budget - Revenue

Revenue = 2.5% sales tax + 4 Mills to Town in 2028 and 2029; 12 mills to Town in 2030 forward  
 Taxes highlighted in green must be approved by the voters

All \$ figures in 000s

Revenue	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
Property Tax - 4 mills, then 12 mills		\$873	\$903	\$2,960	\$3,038	\$3,256	\$3,338	\$3,565	\$3,650	\$3,886	\$3,978	\$4,236	\$4,336	\$4,617
Sales Tax - 2.5%		\$1,856	\$1,930	\$2,007	\$2,088	\$2,171	\$2,258	\$2,348	\$2,442	\$2,540	\$2,642	\$2,747	\$2,857	\$2,972
Use Tax - 2.5%		\$292	\$304	\$316	\$329	\$342	\$356	\$370	\$385	\$400	\$416	\$433	\$450	\$468
Retail Marijuana Tax - 3%		\$50	\$52	\$54	\$56	\$58	\$61	\$63	\$66	\$68	\$71	\$74	\$77	\$80
Highway Users Tax Fund		\$135	\$141	\$147	\$152	\$158	\$165	\$171	\$178	\$185	\$193	\$201	\$209	\$217
Road and Bridge Fund		\$33	\$35	\$36	\$37	\$39	\$41	\$42	\$44	\$46	\$47	\$49	\$51	\$53
Specific Ownership Tax		\$75	\$78	\$82	\$85	\$88	\$92	\$95	\$99	\$103	\$107	\$112	\$116	\$121
Grants and TIF		\$0	\$260	\$270	\$281	\$292	\$304	\$316	\$329	\$342	\$356	\$370	\$385	\$400
Other fees		\$50	\$52	\$54	\$56	\$58	\$61	\$63	\$66	\$68	\$71	\$74	\$77	\$80
Planning Department		\$90	\$187	\$195	\$202	\$211	\$219	\$228	\$237	\$246	\$256	\$266	\$277	\$288
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>		<b>\$3,456</b>	\$3,943	<b>\$6,121</b>	\$6,326	\$6,675	\$6,893	\$7,263	\$7,496	\$7,886	\$8,138	\$8,562	\$8,836	\$9,296



First year of revenue at 4 mills

First full year of revenue at 12 mills; fire/EMS services included in budget

# Property Tax Rates in Two Steps

## Residential and Commercial Property Tax

Property Tax Mill Levies	Current	2028 - 2029 Proposed	2030 Forward Proposed
Municipality	0.000	4.000	12.000
School District	57.168	57.168	57.168
Boulder County	22.661	22.661	22.661
Fire District	16.247	16.247	0.000*
North CO Water District	1.000	1.000	1.000
Other (Flood; Ecopass)	0.900	0.900	0.900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97.976</b>	<b>101.976</b>	<b>93.729</b>
<b>Change from current</b>		<b>+4.000</b>	<b>-4.247</b>

Note – Based on feedback from Dec 9 town hall and additional research on costs, the proposed mill levy was increased from 10 mills to 12 mills.

\* Fire paid by Town budget instead of property tax.

# Sales Tax Rate Lower than Boulder or Longmont

Sales Tax Components	Niwot Current	Niwot Proposed	Boulder	Longmont
Municipality	0.00%	<b>2.50%</b>	3.86%	3.53%
Boulder County	1.335%*	1.335%	1.335%	1.335%
Colorado State	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%
RDT + Special	1.10%	1.10%	1.10%	1.10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.335%</b>	<b>7.835%</b>	<b>9.195%</b>	<b>8.865%</b>

\* Tax rate in Boulder County increased from 1.19% to 1.335% as of January 1, 2026.

Municipalities are typically funded with sales taxes. With increased local economic vitality, more of the sales tax revenue will come from visitors to Niwot.

# Property and Sales Tax Implications

- Residential Property Tax: Per \$1,000,000 home actual value @ 6.8% assessment rate
  - 4 mills = \$272
  - 4.247 mills = \$289 savings
- Commercial Property Tax: Per \$1,000,000 actual value @ 25% assessment rate
  - 4 mills = \$1,000
  - 4.247 mills = \$1,062 savings
- Sales Tax: 2.5% = \$25 for every \$1,000 purchased

# What Does This Mean for My Household in the Short-Term?

2028 and 2029 Examples – 2.5% sales tax and 4 mills Town property tax

Home Value	Annual Purchases	Current Prop tax	Current Sales tax	Total you pay now	Change in Prop Tax	Change in Sales tax	Combined change
\$3,000,000	\$30,000	\$19,341	\$1,601	\$20,942	\$797	\$750	\$1,547
\$2,000,000	\$30,000	\$12,740	\$1,601	\$14,341	\$525	\$750	\$1,275
<b>\$1,500,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$9,440</b>	<b>\$1,067</b>	<b>\$10,507</b>	<b>\$389</b>	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$889</b>
\$1,000,000	\$20,000	\$6,139	\$1,067	\$7,206	\$253	\$500	\$753
\$1,000,000	\$10,000	\$6,139	\$534	\$6,673	\$253	\$250	\$503
\$500,000	\$5,000	\$2,971	\$267	\$3,237	\$122	\$125	\$247

Approximate average home value and household purchases in Niwot



# What Does This Mean for My Household in the Long-Term?

2030 Forward Examples – 2.5% sales tax and 12 mills Town property tax (net -4.247 mills)

Home Value	Annual Purchases	Current Prop tax	Current Sales tax	Total you pay now	Change in Prop Tax	Change in Sales tax	Combined Change
\$3,000,000	\$30,000	\$19,341	\$1,601	\$20,942	-\$846	\$750	-\$96
\$2,000,000	\$30,000	\$12,740	\$1,601	\$14,341	-\$557	\$750	\$193
\$1,500,000	\$20,000	\$9,440	\$1,067	\$10,507	-\$413	\$500	\$87
\$1,000,000	\$20,000	\$6,139	\$1,067	\$7,206	-\$269	\$500	\$231
\$1,000,000	\$10,000	\$6,139	\$534	\$6,673	-\$269	\$250	-\$19
\$500,000	\$5,000	\$2,971	\$267	\$3,237	-\$130	\$125	-\$5

Approximate average home value and household purchases in Niwot

For almost no change in total taxes, we get self-governance and our roads fixed



# Pro Forma Budget – Expenses (Part 1)

Expenses	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
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## Pay and Benefits:

Town Manager	\$36	\$108	<b>\$112</b>	\$117	\$121	\$126	\$131	\$136	\$142	\$148	\$153	\$160	\$166	\$173
Town Clerk	\$28	\$85	<b>\$89</b>	\$92	\$96	\$100	\$104	\$108	\$112	\$117	\$122	\$126	\$131	\$137
Deputy Clerk/Admin	\$20	\$60	<b>\$62</b>	\$65	\$67	\$70	\$73	\$76	\$79	\$82	\$85	\$89	\$92	\$96
Benefits – 30% of salaries	\$25	\$76	<b>\$79</b>	\$82	\$85	\$89	\$92	\$96	\$100	\$104	\$108	\$112	\$117	\$122
Contracting Attorney/Prosecutor	\$15	\$45	<b>\$47</b>	\$49	\$51	\$53	\$55	\$57	\$60	\$62	\$64	\$67	\$70	\$72
Mayor	\$4	\$12	<b>\$12</b>	\$13	\$13	\$14	\$15	\$15	\$16	\$16	\$17	\$18	\$18	\$19
Town Council	\$12	\$36	<b>\$36</b>	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36
Municipal Court/Contract Judge	\$3	\$9	<b>\$19</b>	\$19	\$20	\$21	\$22	\$23	\$23	\$24	\$25	\$26	\$27	\$28

## Service Contracts:

Public Safety - Boulder County Sheriff	\$150	<b>\$468</b>	\$487	\$506	\$526	\$547	\$569	\$592	\$616	\$640	\$666	\$693	\$720
Fire Protection/EMS Contract		<b>\$1,950</b>	\$2,028	\$2,109	\$2,193	\$2,281	\$2,372	\$2,467	\$2,566	\$2,669	\$2,775	\$2,886	\$3,002
Public Works - Road routine work	\$144	<b>\$431</b>	\$448	\$466	\$485	\$504	\$524	\$545	\$567	\$590	\$613	\$638	\$663
Public Works - Snow removal, etc.	\$77	<b>\$232</b>	\$241	\$251	\$261	\$271	\$282	\$294	\$305	\$318	\$330	\$343	\$357
Public Works - Parks and trails	\$20	<b>\$62</b>	\$65	\$67	\$70	\$73	\$76	\$79	\$82	\$85	\$89	\$92	\$96
Planning and Development	\$90	<b>\$187</b>	\$195	\$202	\$211	\$219	\$228	\$237	\$246	\$256	\$266	\$277	\$288



First full year without County help and with contracted fire/EMS services



# Pro Forma Budget – Expenses (Part 2)

Expenses	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
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## Administrative Expenses:

Office Space	\$12	\$36	\$38	\$39	\$41	\$42	\$44	\$46	\$48	\$50	\$52	\$54	\$56	\$58
Insurance (P&C, W/C and liability)	\$12	\$88	\$91	\$95	\$99	\$103	\$107	\$111	\$115	\$120	\$125	\$130	\$135	\$140
IT	\$50	\$25	\$26	\$27	\$28	\$29	\$30	\$32	\$33	\$34	\$36	\$37	\$38	\$40
Finance Contracting/Auditing	\$30	\$60	\$62	\$65	\$67	\$70	\$73	\$76	\$79	\$82	\$85	\$89	\$92	\$96

## Other Expenses:

Materials Costs	\$33	\$100	\$104	\$108	\$112	\$117	\$122	\$127	\$132	\$137	\$142	\$148	\$154	\$160
Election Costs		\$20	\$21	\$22	\$22	\$23	\$24	\$25	\$26	\$27	\$28	\$30	\$31	\$32
Events and Beautification		\$180	\$187	\$195	\$202	\$211	\$219	\$228	\$237	\$246	\$256	\$266	\$277	\$288
Downtown improvements		\$70	\$73	\$76	\$79	\$82	\$85	\$89	\$92	\$96	\$100	\$104	\$108	\$112
Incorporation Costs		\$150												
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	\$283	\$1,644	\$4,391	\$4,565	\$4,746	\$4,934	\$5,130	\$5,334	\$5,546	\$5,766	\$5,995	\$6,234	\$6,481	\$6,739

## Roads Project Loan Repayment

	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076	\$1,076
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## Net to Reserves

	-\$283	\$1,812	-\$448	\$479	\$503	\$664	\$687	\$853	\$874	\$1,043	\$1,067	\$1,252	\$1,278	\$1,481
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## Cumulative Reserves

	\$1,529	\$1,080	\$1,560	\$2,063	\$2,727	\$3,414	\$4,267	\$5,140	\$6,184	\$7,250	\$8,502	\$9,780	\$11,261
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Start repayment of bond for capital roads project

First full year without County help and with contracted fire/EMS services



# Fire and Emergency - Niwot Pays Too Much

- Actual cost of fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS) related to **number of homes, residents and square miles**
- Protection paid through mill levy (currently 16.246 mills) is proportional to **property values**
- Town can negotiate a fire and EMS contract paid by Town, removing property tax mill levy. Town pays more, but property owners pay lower property taxes for significant savings.

	Niwot	Lyons Fire Protection	Boulder Rural Fire Rescue	Niwot Proposed
Provider	Mountain View (MVFPD)			To Bid
# Residents	4,100	6,200	17,500	4,100
Sq Miles	4	66	26	4
Approx cost/yr*	\$3.4M**	\$2.8M	\$7.9M	~\$1.8M
Cost/resident	\$830	\$450	\$450	\$450 to \$500
Cost/sq mile	\$850K	\$42K	\$300K	\$300 to \$400K

\* 2025 costs

\*\* Includes property tax assessment, SOT contribution, and property tax loss

# Moving from Fire District Mill Levy to Contracted Service

- A municipality can remove its territory from a special district (e.g., fire protection district) per CRS Title 32, Article 1, Part 5 “Exclusion of property within municipality – procedure”
- CRS Title 29 Intergovernmental Cooperation and Tile 32 Special Districts allows for contracting of services between municipalities and a nearby district or department.
- This is common in Colorado - Examples are City of Evans and Steamboat Springs
- We have a professionally prepared Request for Proposal that details current fire and EMS services
- New or renegotiated service must have same quality and response times



# Steps in Change to Contracted Fire Services

- Ballot petition includes vote to approve property tax up to 4 mills. Sufficient to fund Town's expenses, including the roads, but excluding fire and EMS services
- Petition also includes separate vote to approve property tax of up to 8 mills conditional on properties not being in a fire district (12 mills total)
- The added cost is 4 mills until and unless the change is made, then it's a 4.247 mills reduction (removal of current 16.247 mills to MVFPD)
- Pro Forma is based on taking two years but could be shorter or longer. If longer, the property tax remains at 4 mills
- All the reasons to incorporate are valid and reasonable, regardless of this change

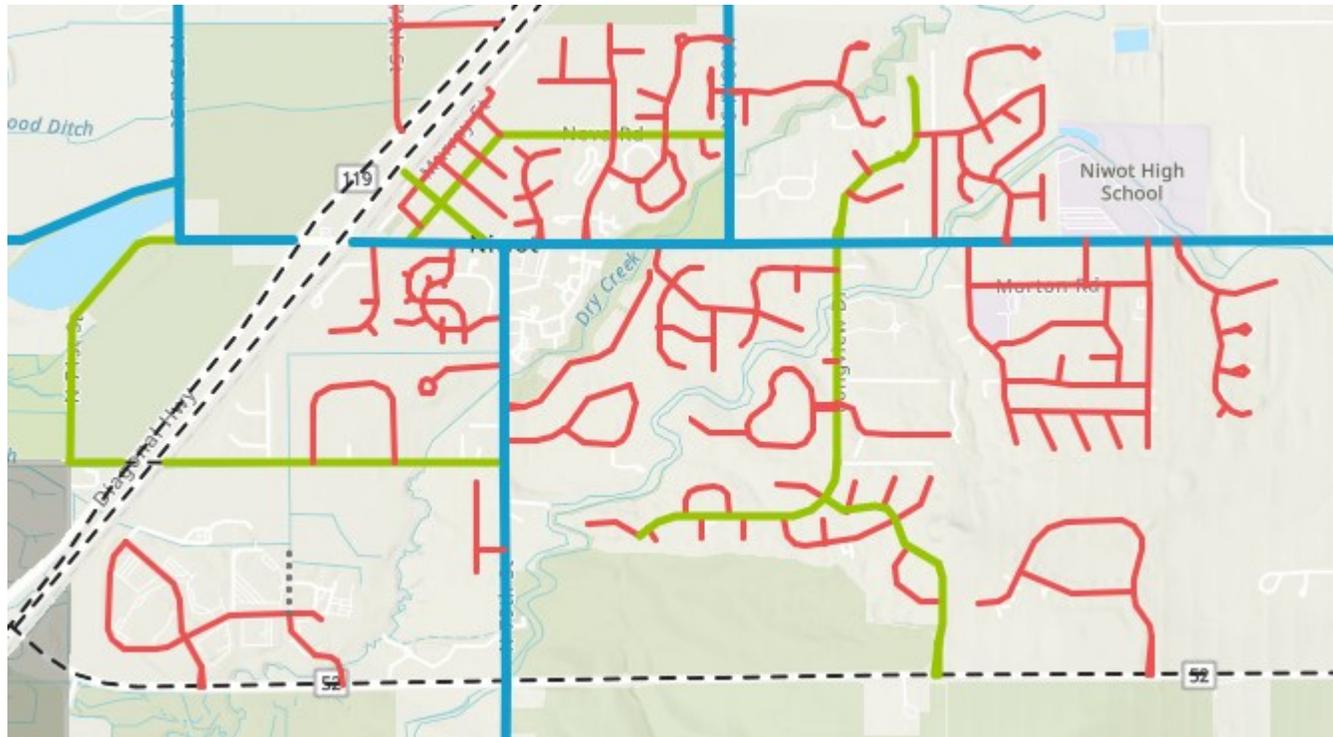
# Public Safety - Incorporation Allows Us to Set Priorities

- Currently served by Boulder County Sheriff “as needed”
- Calculates to **60% of a deputy**
- Pro forma includes a **full-time deputy assigned to Niwot**
- **Cost provided by Sheriff is \$400K (as of 2025)**
- Over half of Sheriff Department’s revenue is contracts with municipalities
- **Sheriff is elected and does not report to County Commissioners**



# Public Works – Snow Removal

Boulder County's Snow Removal Map –  
Red means “don't hold your breath”



## Snow Removal (Priority Level)

1. These roads are on a primary snow removal route, indicates that the road will be plowed to maintain continuous all-weather access within the maximum capabilities of the county

2. These roads are on a secondary snow removal route, indicates that the road will be plowed to provide reasonable all-weather access as time, available funds and manpower permit

3. Snow will not be removed to provide access during all storm conditions and will be plowed only as time, available funds, and manpower permit

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## State Owned Roads

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The Town of Niwot will hire its own contractors for snow removal to provide much better service.

# Road Repair and Maintenance

Total of about 29 miles, including main arteries

## 1. Capital Project – Repairs to bring all roads up to excellent condition (PCI > 70)

- Remove and reconstruct about 7 miles at ~\$1.4M/mile
- Mill and overlay about 5 miles of marginal condition roads at ~\$800K/mile
- Chip seal about 5 miles of good condition roads at ~\$100K per mile

**Total estimated cost is \$13 to \$15M (2026 \$)**

## 2. Annual operating expense for routine maintenance estimated at \$430K

- Crack seal 20% of total roads each year at \$13K/mile
- Chip (or slurry) seal 15% of total roads each year at \$82K/mile



# What About Private Roads and Burgundy Park?

- Roads through 10 HOAs are on property owned by HOA, not dedicated in subdivision process to County
- Amounts to <3 miles (9% of all roads in boundary)
- Option to dedicate roads and transfer maintenance to Town by mutual agreement of HOA and Town Council
- Management of Burgundy Park PID will shift by law from County Commissioners to Town Council. The PID can be dissolved with Town taking maintenance responsibility or left in place with PID revenue dedicated to future repairs of Burgundy Park roads.



# Other Possible Services

Not included in pro forma but could be considered by Town Council. Initial discussions with possible providers underway.

- Internet (e.g., NextLight)
- Electricity

# Problems Solved

- Roads
- Land Use and Zoning
- Planning and Community Development

All addressed in near total tax neutral basis

Local governance demonstrated repeatedly to improve quality of life and desirability

Studies by real estate economists show an additional appreciation of 13-15% in newly incorporated areas several years out



# Incorporation Process

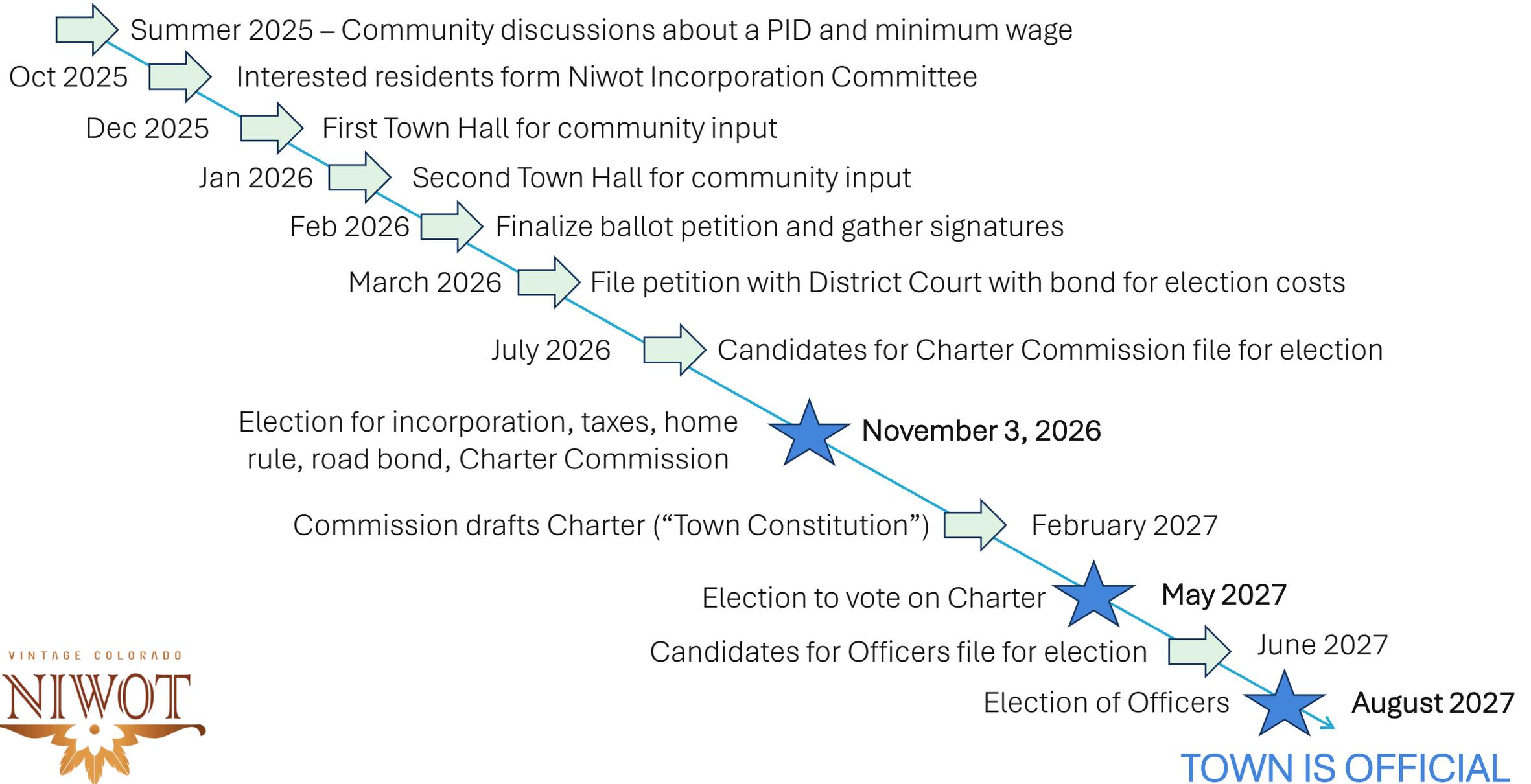
Decisions Are Made by Niwot Voters

# Organization Overview: Niwot Incorporation Committee

- Niwot Incorporation Committee is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation
- Engaged Widner Juran LLP (attorney for the last 3 municipal incorporations in Colorado)
- Solicited experts and input for feasibility study (pro forma budget)
- Commissioned property survey and proof of number of inhabitants
- Preparing Petition – Draft version will be available for comments
- **100% funded by Niwot residents and/or business owners** (separate from future campaign costs)
  - \$150,000 to \$200,000 for attorney fees, experts, election costs, etc.
  - \$143,000 pledged in interest-free loans and donations
- **No developers or outside interests involved**
- **This is entirely a grass roots effort by residents that want the best for Niwot's future**



# Timeline – Three Elections



# Ballot Questions on Petition

Petition is drafted and will be finalized after feedback over next month

Multiple separate questions, asking for approval to/for:

- Organize specified territory into a City (The Charter Commission can call it the Town of Niwot but for population >2,000 the legal term is City until Home Rule is established)
- Form a Home Rule Charter Commission
- 2.5% sales and use tax
- Not to exceed 4 mills property tax
- Not to exceed 8 mills property tax only on properties that are excluded from a fire protection district
- 3.0% tax on retail marijuana sales
- Give the Town Council authority to issue bonds to fund a capital roads project, up to a set limit

Candidates for Charter Commission will submit their own petitions and will also be on the ballot



# Decisions Made by Registered Niwot Voters

## 1. November 2026 Election - Incorporation, Home Rule, tax and bond questions

Plus election of 9 Charter Commissioners to draft the home rule charter

Any Niwot resident registered voter can run for Charter Commission

## 2. May 2027 Election to vote on Town Charter

Elected Charter Commissioners will write the Town Charter, which is the Constitution for the Town:

- Municipality's powers
- Governing structure
- Terms of elected offices
- Budget and election procedures
- Procedures for referendum of measures, etc.
- Other policies
- Official name of municipality



# Decisions Made by Registered Niwot Voters

## 3. August 2027 election of a Town Council

The Town Council will decide on:

- Policies on land use and planning, rural preservation, business revitalization, etc.
- Contracts with Sheriff, Fire/EMS, road contractors, public works (e.g., snow removal), etc.
- Staffing
- Planning department
- Facilities to use for Town business
- Budget and mill levy (up to voter-approved amount)
- All decisions must be consistent with the Town Charter

**Boulder County is obligated to continue to provide services for one year after Town Council is sworn in.**



# Ways to Provide Input and Get Involved

- Fill out response sheet and drop in baskets on your way out
- Send a message to [Contact@Niwot.Town](mailto:Contact@Niwot.Town) to do any of the following:
  - Request a representative at an HOA or neighborhood meeting
  - Provide comments and suggestions, ask questions
  - Volunteer to be a Community Liaison to your HOA, neighborhood, or other groups
  - Help with funding (loans and donations)
- Visit [Niwot.Town](http://Niwot.Town) for FAQs, presentations, updates and to join the contact list



Niwot.Town





# Counties and Municipalities Have Different Roles

- Under Colorado law:
  - Counties provide regional services across large geographic areas.
  - Municipalities provide local services tailored to their communities.
- Niwot is an outlier – most communities of Niwot’s size are incorporated.
- We’re not too small or too rural - we just need to step into our proper governance role.
- If we don’t incorporate, we remain at an economic disadvantage compared to neighboring municipalities.
- Incorporation won’t jeopardize what works in our relationship with the County.



# Services the County Will Continue to Provide

- Public Health and Human Services
- Courts and Justice System for Major Offenses
- Major Roadways and Regional Transportation
- Regional Services – open space (county-owned land stays county-owned), RTD, emergency management coordination
- Elections – ballots, registration, county, state, and federal elections
- Property Assessment and Tax Collection
- Vital Records – birth, adoption, death, marriage, divorce



# Open Space and Conservation Easements

