

LOCAL NEWS

Boulder City Council supports 4401 Broadway development plan

Council also hears updates on New Vista High School development plan

By **AMBER CARLSON** | acarlson@prairiemountainmedia.com | July 13, 2023 at 10:00 p.m.

Boulder City Council expressed broad support Thursday evening for an ambitious redevelopment plan at 4401 Broadway that has been several years in the making.

The proposed development will include housing, retail, art studio space, light industrial use and community green spaces, and it will also provide a new, custom-designed home for the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art.

During a presentation on the project, Boulder principal planner Chandler Van Schaack said the area is located within the North Boulder Art District, an “inclusive, grassroots community dedicated to promoting artists and creative businesses.” The site plan includes 17,000 square feet of museum space, 17,500 square feet of storefront commercial space, 67 residential units and 96 parking spaces.



However, Van Schaack noted, some changes to land use and zoning in the area would be necessary to allow for the museum to be built on the site and to allow for the proposed residential density. He said that if councilmembers supported making land use and zoning changes, they might need to look at creating a new “flex zone” district to accommodate the project, and the council would need to direct city staff to start work on that process.

“I’m not sure I’ve seen a proposal like this where almost everything in our current land use code and zoning ordinance requires modification to make this happen. Have you ever seen the like?” asked Mayor Pro Tem Mark Wallach.

“No, I don’t know that anyone has,” Van Schaack said.

But when Councilmember Matthew Benjamin asked if a “flex zone” has been used before, Van Schaack explained that this type of zoning was used in some updates to Boulder’s land use regulations in the mid-2000s.

“The idea behind the flex zone was really ... to borrow from different elements of the zoning code so you can pick ... your intensity standards. So it’s kind of a menu system. A ‘cafeteria zoning’ is what we refer to it as,” he said.

In a second presentation, Boulder native Andrew Ghadimi’s family acquired the site in 1979. He described himself as “deeply rooted in the North Boulder community.”

“Over the past 35 years I have witnessed the remarkable transformation of the neighborhood from an industrial area ... to the vibrant NoBo Arts District,” Ghadimi said. “My intention has always been to support the creatives in our community.”

David Dadone, director of the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, said during the presentation that expanding the facility is “crucial to achieving the (museum’s) vision and increasing our impact.”

With the new facility, he said, the museum hopes to achieve objectives like deepening engagement with artists, supporting year-round programming, becoming accessible to more people, and creating more opportunities for community gathering and conversation.

Danica Powell with Trestle Strategy Group, who works on the applicant’s project team, said the team was asking for things that the city code currently doesn’t allow because “that’s what the community has asked us to ask for.”

Mayor Aaron Brockett said the project had the potential to be “transformational” for

After hearing presentations and discussing the development in great detail, councilmembers overwhelmingly expressed support for the project. They also supported moving forward with amending the land use map for the area as well as pursuing the possibility of a flex zone.

Earlier in the evening, the council heard updates on the development plan at New Vista High School. In the proposed plan, the existing high school building would be demolished and replaced with a two-story, 74,000 square-foot high school. There would also be a new sports field, bigger parking lot and improved access.

Since the plan last came before the council, Boulder Valley School District had made some changes to the plan. Proposed changes included improving parking and creating a safer vehicular drop-off area.

Speaking during a public hearing, Molly Sorenson, a mother of two 2023 New Vista grads, said “New Vista is in desperate need of a safe, new and well-functioning building. That’s very evident.”

“This building is literally falling down ... when it rains outside or snows outside, it’s dripping everywhere. ... I just want to make sure you understand the importance of the construction moving forward and staying on schedule for us,” she added.

Later in the evening, the council discussed a proposed unification of ballot measures that would extend the 0.15% sales tax. Councilmembers also were set to discuss extending midterm recruitment for boards and commissions that haven’t received any applications, but they did not discuss the matter before the Daily Camera’s print deadline.



Amber Carlson

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