

Guest commentary

The hard truth on CU South

By Jan Trussell

Claudia Hanson Thiem's recent warm and fuzzy opinion piece on CU South (Insight, Dec. 12) managed to leave out many of the hard truths regarding the CU South proposal. Apparently Thiem does not live in Martin Acres, Majestic Heights, Tantra or Table Mesa, as these neighborhoods would bear the brunt of this massive development. Here are some facts surrounding this issue that the people of Boulder, especially those who live in South Boulder should be aware of. There's a reason this is one of the longest planning projects in Boulder's history.

As always, the premise of affordable housing is mentioned, saying this could be the urban eco-village Boulder seems to want. Thiem neglects to mention the proposed CU South Campus is 308 acres, roughly the size of CU's 313-acres main campus.

Fact: As far as affordability goes, there is absolutely no guarantee any housing CU builds will be affordable. Recent housing added at Williams Village is well above the average market rents. It is misleading to suggest this would be the case when recent evidence suggests the contrary.

Many of us in South Boulder are still reeling from the devastation of the flood. Martin Acres came together as a community, throwing sandbags in waistdeep water on Martin Drive to divert the water away from residential properties and the school. In what world does adding thousands of new residents and buildings on a flood plain make any sense? It seems those who weren't impacted from the 2013 flood have learned nothing.

Thiem says the university is willing to donate the necessary land, plus additional acreage, in exchange for access to city utilities. Fact: Saying that the university is offering 80 acres of land at no cost for the city's flood mitigation project is wildly false, since CU is expecting the city to kick in anywhere from \$25 million to \$99 million for fill dirt to raise this proposed development above the flood plain. The taxpayers of Boulder are on the hook for this amount, as it's part of the deal.

The statements that adding 2,200 to 2,300 residents will not have any impact on traffic is severely misleading. Thiem also fails to address the concern on many South Boulder residents' minds: CU's seemingly unquenchable thirst for more students, campuses and growth. Fact: We live in a reality that most new residents bring their vehicles with them, oftentimes multiple vehicles. Table Mesa Drive and South Broadway are already largely impacted with heavy traffic at peak hours. It is almost impossible to make a left turn out of Martin Acres onto Table Mesa at most times of the day. It is certain that Moorhead Avenue, among other neighborhood streets, would be used as a cut through shortcut for those traveling to the main campus. Suppose CU allows no vehicles at this development? Where will all the vehicles end up? Parked in our surrounding neighborhoods, of course.

Fact: With new developments, there is always the promise of reduced or no parking. When Brookside apartments were built, it came with reduced parking requirements. Many of those residents park their vehicles on the neighborhood streets bordering this development. In addition to that, students, visitors and football fans parking their vehicles in Martin Acres to access the main campus often park across our driveways, preventing us from getting out. The city rarely enforces their own rules regarding parking, so nothing is ever done. One can only imagine a repeated scenario should this development become reality.

Finally, according to Thiem, we can't stop myths about the project from spreading and we can't satisfy everyone, particularly, the "core of committed opponents." I guess this includes open space supporters, everyday residents trying to navigate South Boulder's increasing traffic jams and those who were impacted by the 2013 flood. Believe me when I say I am all of the above.

No, Ms. Thiem, you can't stop myths or conspiracy theories, but you can reveal the whole truth as opposed to leaving "certain glaring facts" out of the discussion as you have creatively managed to do in your opinion piece. The conversation has been toxic and exclusionary, to be sure. If I were to make a guess, I would say that it is the residents of Table Mesa, Martin Acres, Majestic Heights and Tantra neighborhoods who have been excluded from this conversation and have the most to lose should this development see the light of day.

Jan Trussell lives in Martin Acres in Boulder.