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## **Shop owners bear up for new North Nevada**

**By SARAH COLWELL THE GAZETTE**

Although the redevelopment project for North Nevada Avenue received unanimous approval from the Colorado Springs City Council in December, many North Nevada business owners fear the project could hurt them.

Thursday, 25 of those business owners met at Señor Manuel's Mexican Cuisine to discuss their concerns and develop a unified effort to lessen the impact on their businesses.

"A lot of (the development) is inevitable, and some would agree it is necessary," said Mitch Christiamsen of Century Commercial Builders. "But what they are doing to the property is not necessary, and it is destroying our business out here. We are not going to be able to stop them, so what we have to do is try and control them."

The development is part of the city's latest urban renewal project, which aims to transform 390 acres along North Nevada from Austin Bluffs Parkway to Interstate 25 into a major retail and economic development center.

Most of the business owners who met Thursday are apprehensive about the width of the proposed road project and accessibility to their businesses during and after construction.

"Our biggest issue at this time is the six lanes," Mika Hernandez of Senor Manuel's said of a project that would add two lanes to create a six-lane road. "Under the new construction plan, we will lose all our parking spaces."

A 28-foot-wide median and two 6-foot-wide bicycle lanes will also be part of the project, said Don Sides, urban renewal project manager.

Some retailers said they like the idea of a six-lane road because it could increase business. But they are concerned about vehicle access.

Road construction could also decrease accessibility and discourage potential customers from coming to businesses.

"With all that construction, a number of businesses are going to go out of business if they can't withstand the construction and if they don't have access to the customers," said Jim Hill of Car Wash and Auto Load.

Some in the group proposed asking the city to allow construction to take place only after normal business hours.

The first public meeting for concerned business owners in the North Nevada area will be 6 to 8 p.m. Feb. 16 at the Comcor Administration Building, 3615 Roberts Road.

Members of the Urban Renewal Authority met with Nevada Avenue business owners last week to hear their concerns. Revised drafts have been created taking into account their comments and concerns, Sides said.

Under the redevelopment plan, some small businesses would be removed in favor of big-box stores, restaurants, offices and housing. Senor Manuel's, the Squatting Chicken

and the Harley-Davidson dealership are the only businesses that fit into the plan, said Chuck Miller, a consultant for the city.

Emanuel Micciulla of Mowers & Motors has accepted that he doesn't fit.

"I've gone the other way and am looking to sell my property," he said. "We're talking about high dollar and high retail, and my business doesn't fit into that."

Others plan to fight.

"Some of us have been around for 35 years," Hernandez said. "But we feel like we are being looked over and undervalued."

City planners do value the businesses, said Jim Rees, urban redevelopment manager.

"We are trying to accommodate the local businesses and their concerns," he said. "The whole idea of this project is to keep businesses and increase economic development. We're not trying to take business away from everyone."

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