

# BC merchants fret over cable TV construction

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BOULDER CREEK — Area residents are both excited and upset about plans to expand Boulder Creek's cable television service.

Many cable customers are looking forward to having 60 channels to choose from instead of 12, but downtown merchants are leery of United Artists Cable's plans to dig 22 holes in downtown sidewalks and install a number of above-ground electronics boxes.

Merchants worry the sidewalk construction will rattle their nerves with jackhammer noise and choke off downtown with trenches and barriers during the Christmas shopping season. They say they

were never told of the construction plans, but were tipped off when workers came out one day and began making marks on the sidewalk.

A meeting between cable company representatives, merchants and residents is scheduled for 8 a.m. Thursday at the Boulder Creek firehouse. The meeting, mediated by County Supervisor Fred Keeley, will allow residents to have some say on the sidewalk construction plans.

"They expected to come in and just do it," said businessman Arthur Andrews. "I can understand their need to expedite their work, but no one came to see if it could be done in a good way for everybody. We want to know in advance

when something is going to happen downtown, and we want to have some input about it."

United Artists Cable is expanding its capacity countywide, and is running fiber optic lines up to a Boulder Creek "hub site," according to General Manager Stewart Butler. The company is now drawing up a construction plan they hope will reassure downtown merchants, Butler said. The plan will be displayed at Thursday's meeting.

Installing new cable requires digging because all Boulder Creek's utilities are in underground conduits, Butler noted. Company workers recently drilled beneath Highway 9 and installed one new cable conduit, but the rest of the

fiber optic line will be placed in existing conduits, Butler said.

The company also has 22 concrete equipment boxes, similar to water meter boxes, located in downtown sidewalks. Many of the boxes are too small to accommodate the system's new equipment and must be rebuilt, and others must be removed, Butler said.

"Our contractor estimates the work will take about two weeks if they work straight through," he said. "Work on the boxes won't delay service to homes up there," but businesses in the downtown district won't be able to get the new service until the boxes are rebuilt, he said.

United Artists also plans to install a number of green, metal

"above ground pedestals" to house electronic equipment too delicate to be placed underground, Butler said. The placement and appearance of those pedestals is of great interest to downtown merchants, who have worked hard over the years to preserve the casual, coun-

try look of downtown.

"We'll see if the problems can be negotiated between the merchants and the cable company," said Keeley. "For many of the merchants, over 60 percent of their sales take place between now and the end of the year."

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