



# 2023 Listening Tour with Mayor Yemi & City Council

## District 5 Feedback Summary Report

**Overview:** This report provides a summary of all of the feedback captured at the District 5 Listening Session with Councilmembers Nancy Henjum (District 5), David Leinweber (At-Large), and Brian Risley (At-Large) at COS City Hub on Aug. 11, 2023. Feedback received from this session does not necessarily reflect feedback solely from residents who live in District 5.

### Summary:

#### **Public Safety & Homelessness:**

Police response times and the need to solve homelessness and related issues were nearly universally mentioned by citizens. Requests to better enforce existing laws around panhandling, camping, graffiti, and other related issues were also prevalent, particularly in the City's parks and green spaces. While many voiced support for the plan for a new police academy, more officers, and higher salaries to retain officers, several also voiced the need for better anti-bias and mental health training to ensure fewer police abuses and lawsuits. Many other site-specific and neighborhood-specific issues were raised; see full notes for details.

Traffic-related safety issues were frequently raised, with many complaining that street racing, loud mufflers (noise violations), and red-light running is not being enforced.

The Fire Department was complimented on their services multiple times, and the city's FireWise and fire mitigation plans were well-liked.

#### **Infrastructure & Utilities:**

One of the biggest complaints was that the City is not doing enough to develop and maintain safe, accessible sidewalks and streetscapes/curbs. The need for more and better public transportation and multi-modal transportation options was also frequently raised, and other associated items like the need for electric buses and specific routes to better serve seniors and the military bases were also mentioned. Citizens seemed to appreciate the free bus transportation offerings during the summer—and wanted that to continue beyond the summer.

Regarding the City's road networks, the need to better maintain roadways and fix potholes was voiced several times. Many feel that the City could do a better job of utilizing 'smart city' tech to deal with traffic, stoplights, and other issues. Problems with East-West transit corridors (and lack thereof) were mentioned frequently, as was the need for more bike lanes.

Many mentioned the importance of transitioning to sustainable energy solutions, including renewable energy production and water conservation. This topic also came up in the housing and development category, with citizens suggesting that developers should be incentivized to build greener and/or carbon

neutral homes and include solar. Compliments were given to the City's drinking water system; stormwater was raised as a continuing issue to be addressed in certain areas.

### **Economy:**

Citizens voiced support for the retention of Space Command and the city's military community, while sharing concerns that perhaps the City is overly reliant on the military and Department of Defense for economic growth. Several suggested that the City focus more on recruiting non-military / Department of Defense jobs, including consulting, management, and finance.

The City's support for tourism was appreciated, although some suggested the City could do more to boost tourism, specifically eco-tourism. More people complimented or expressed support for 'Olympic City' branding than detracted from it.

Several suggested that retaining employees and talent are problems for the City's business community, with citizens suggesting that boosting development Downtown instead of in the suburbs could help attract more younger employees with more nightlife and culture and reduce 'brain drain.'

### **Housing / Development:**

The lack of affordable housing was a top concern for nearly all participants. There were mixed opinions on how to address the issue – many expressed support for truly affordable housing, including specific accolades to projects like LaunchPad and Artspace, while others suggested that the city needs fewer apartment communities and more 'middle housing'; townhomes, condos, etc., were provided as examples. Support for getting rid of legislation that restricted condo development (construction defect laws) was also mentioned, as was restricting AirBnBs / short-term rentals.

Support for density was expressed ('build up, not out'), as was the need for more green spaces and developer funding for parks, infrastructure, 'green construction', and other amenities.

### **City Governance / Administration:**

Many expressed support for the GoCOS app and the City's Code Enforcement division, but citizens felt that City Planning was not transparent enough and felt a lack of trust in that department. The city's website interface and user experience was criticized more than once as being difficult to navigate and looking outdated.

Several supported providing a salary to City Council to allow more people to run for office, and several voiced concerns that Council was too friendly to developers.

Support for higher taxes and/or better funding for the city was raised several times, with citizens suggesting that an over-reliance on sales tax was a problem, as was TABOR.

### **Schools / Education:**

The lack of affordable childcare services in COS was mentioned a few times, with some suggesting that childcare be subsidized. Many support trade schools and more education in public schools for trade employment, and some suggested that the military and Department of Defense community could become more involved in schools to help encourage or train students to want to pursue jobs in that sector.

The importance of diversity in education and education leadership was raised, and several expressed support for the Pikes Peak Library District. Workforce housing for teachers was requested.

## Other Topics:

A range of other commentary was provided, from citizens expressing concerns or dislike of metro districts and airport noise to requests for a 'tax free day' and better senior services / age-in-place support services.

## Full Notes:

Organized by topic; asterisk (\*) indicates sentiment repeated.

### Topic: Public Safety & Homelessness

- What is being done to address homelessness and drugs / root causes of homelessness?\*\*\*\*\*
- Developers should be forced to fund homes / housing for homeless.
- Enforce existing laws regarding panhandling, camping, sleeping, and graffiti.\*\*\*\*\*
- Improve CSPD response times.\*\*\*\*\*
- Is there a community policing program?
- Need more cameras at intersections.\*\*\*
- Address causes of low staff retention at CSPD.\*\*
- Scooters seem dangerous.
- Knob Hill neighborhood is 'no man's land'; like 'wild west.'
- City needs more street cleaning services.\*\*\*
- No enforcement of street racing.\*\*\*\*
- Inconsistent police presence in some neighborhoods.\*\*
- Palmer Heights neighborhood only sees police if a crime has been committed.
- Concerns about marijuana.
- Safety concerns on Rock Island Trail.
- Improve police training and psychological support, need training on anti-bias.\*\*\*\*\*
- Fire Department doing well.
- CSPD has been 'disrespectful' when dealing with situations in D4.
- Support higher salaries for CSPD.\*\*
- CSPD needs to recruit people 'at a higher standard' – especially with regard to mental health.
- Need more police presence on Pikes Peak Greenway, Monument Valley Park – homeless problem making these areas dangerous.
- Homeless camps are a fire hazard.
- Need more dedicated facilities for mental health.
- FireWise Neighborhood Plan is good.
- Need facility for those 'released abusively from hospital.'
- Diversion services needed for those coming out of prison.
- Need supervised drug use site to prevent overdose and prevent usage in public.
- City needs to enforce loud mufflers for noise.
- Afraid to go to the Citadel Mall.
- No control of guns – dangerous for public and for police.

### Topic: Infrastructure & Utilities

- Fix the east/west corridor issue.\*\*\*\*
- Platte and Boulder not enough for east-west travel.
- Need public restrooms, perhaps even public showers.
- Don't make Platte and Boulder one-way streets.
- Sidewalks need to be fixed and maintained; better ADA access needed.\*\*\*\*\*
- Potholes need to be fixed, better road maintenance.\*\*
- Yampa, Cache la Poudre, and Hancock have stormwater drainage problems.

- Hancock bus #12 route seems to strand people and senior citizens.
- More handicapped parking is needed downtown Colorado Springs.
- Is bus system still going to serve Hancock & Golf Acres after work is done at Golf Acres office park?
- Trails north of Uintah are nice.
- Upgrades needed to Monument Valley Park (to boost economy?).
- Stop removing trees in sidewalk / curb repairs.
- Bike lanes in Downtown / D5 are liked.
- Bike lanes need to be bigger.
- Need more multi-modal and public transportation.\*\*\*\*\*
- Need more public transit to military bases.
- Would be willing to pay more in taxes for better parks and cultural services.
- Traffic congestion is becoming an issue.\*
- 'Taking an average of 7 years to get sidewalk work done.'
- Not enough bike infrastructure on roadways.
- Need to bury more electric lines, stop overhead lines (views, fire hazard, wind hazard).\*\*\*
- Road construction – 'every road closed at the same time.'
- Appreciated free bus services this summer.\*\*
- COS water services are great.\*\*
- Like roundabouts, taxes well used for their installation, but public needs education on how to use properly.
- Need better smart traffic control / smart and timed stoplights.\*\*
- Colorado Ave needs traffic calming measures.
- Need more xeriscaping.\*
- Parking meters are good Downtown but shouldn't be used outside of downtown Colorado Springs.
- Parking meters charge too much and ending at 10pm is 'too late.'
- Expanding too much out east for water to keep up – not sustainable.
- City needs to do more to maintain city trees.
- Need municipal-run trash and recycling, too many different companies, tearing up streets and alleys, need zero-waste and composting centers.\*\*\*\*
- 'Does the city have plans to recycle water?'
- Build a riverwalk (COS Creek Plan).\*\*
- Support sustainable energy / utilities, more solar.\*\*\*
- Need more sustainable / electric buses.\*
- Do more for 'climate resiliency' – more trees and shade, use grey water to irrigate.
- Drake closed too soon.
- Need more park inter-connectivity, transportation via greenways.

#### **Topic: Economy**

- Airport is doing well.
- Tourism is doing well, support more eco-tourism.\*\*
- Cost of living is too high.\*\*\*
- Are we doing enough to attract manufacturing?
- Excited to keep Space Command – but do enough to prepare for increased development associated with it.\*\*
- Recruit more companies / jobs other than military and Department of Defense.
- Provide incentives for companies to relocate to COS.
- Difficult to navigate starting brick-and-mortar business.
- Downtown vitality and 'Olympic City' is good.

- Remove red tape for restaurants / bars to have alcohol and alcohol sales on street and activate street (will help discourage homeless to take up space).
- 'City finally has a vibrant Downtown.'
- Too much development in suburbs, need more in Downtown.
- 'Get out of troops and tourism businesses.'\*\*
- City is over-reliant on military for economic vitality.
- Lack of non-Department of Defense and 'non-accredited' jobs (need more management, consulting, finance).
- Propose new taxes to fund economic development / recruitment.
- Do more to incentivize hiring those released from prison.
- Businesses are hurting; cannot get employees.
- Simplify city's permitting process.
- 'Not enough night life and culture'; young people are leaving; brain drain.

**Topic:** Housing / Development

- Downtown apartments are not affordable, except for Artspace.
- Concerns about / what are plans regarding short term rentals / Airbnb's? \*
- 'The way to solve housing is not apartments.\*
- Not enough affordable housing.\*\*\*\*\*
- Too many out of state investors buying homes/townhomes/apts.\*\*
- Builders are not keeping up with influx of people.
- Developers should have to contribute more funds to infrastructure, police, fire depts.
- Public transportation review should be required for new development.
- City needs a program to support first-time homebuyers.
- Missing 'middle income' housing.
- Give developers incentives for energy efficiency / carbon neutral construction.\*\*
- Need LaunchPad Project.
- Get rid of laws preventing condos.
- 'Add density – build up not out'.
- Need more golf courses.\*\*
- Need better "15-minute city" planning.

**Topic:** City Governance / Government Administration

- Hire more people to enforce code violations so city doesn't look 'slummy.'
- Need more city services.
- Restore city parks & rec budget.
- City website seems 'stale, years behind'; confusing to use.\*\*
- Other services suffer if we must pay for more police and firefighters.
- City planning department is not transparent enough.\*
- City planning too focuses 'on data and not on people and places', lack of trust. \*
- GoCOS! app is good.
- Code enforcement is good.
- City needs to do a better job educating residents on importance of multi-family housing and 'how to be courteous' to affordable projects.
- Need publicly financed campaigns for City Council.
- 'Bought and paid for City Council'; developers supporting campaigns.\*\*\*
- Connect city systems to NextDoor app /other neighborhood tech and directories.
- TOPS program is good.
- City reliance on sales tax is regressive.

- Salary the City Council to make it available to those who can't afford to volunteer all their time.  
\*\*\*
- Listening Tour is good, but dates/times are not.
- Need a way to get around / get rid of TABOR.

**Topic:** Schools / Education:

- Support more trade schools / workforce education.\*
- Get military more involved in education for their jobs / Department of Defense jobs.
- Need more preschool / childcare programs and services; childcare too expensive.\*\*
- Childcare should be subsidized.
- Need education and leadership training for diversity.
- Support workforce housing for teachers.
- Library system is great.
- Do more to support city's universities and 'keep smart kids in the city.'

**Topic:** Other

- 'We didn't vote for 'Olympic City' name.'
- City needs more 'Third Spaces' to promote social and cultural inclusion.
- 'Too much jet noise from airport.'
- History Preservation Board does not publish minutes online.
- Have a 'tax free day' like Albuquerque.
- Install more murals to help stop graffiti.
- Create more 'cultural spaces for people to be proud of.'
- Engage more in CONO.
- Need better age-in-place programs.
- Need better elder law and legal attorney services.
- Support horticultural programs.
- Internet access should be free for all.
- Do not like 'metro districts.'