



2023 Listening Tour with Mayor Yemi & City Council

Virtual Listening Session (Citywide) Feedback

Summary Report

Overview: This report provides a summary of all of the feedback captured at the Virtual Listening Session (Citywide) with Councilmember Nancy Henjum (District 5) and Councilmember Michelle Talarico (District 3) conducted on Microsoft Teams on Sept. 9.

Summary:

Public Safety & Homelessness:

The City needs to work on enforcement of anti-camping rules and work to clean up camps around the City's open spaces, especially in some parks along downtown's waterways and the City's west side (8th Street). Response times from CSPD need to be improved, and some citizens expressed support for more officers and a new training academy.

Others, however, repeated the sentiment that 'quantity does not equal quality' and instead want more resources for mental health services and social workers. More resources for women and women with children who are experiencing homelessness were also requested.

Infrastructure & Utilities:

As in other sessions, much of the focus was on the need to improve the City's public transportation system. Citizens asked for more routes connecting the City, cleaner and safer public transportation vehicles, more bike lanes, and more multi-modal transportation options.

Several repeated the comment that too many trash companies are operating in Colorado Springs and requested that service companies be reduced or centralized by the City to avoid disruptive collection operations.

Complaints were raised, as in other sessions, that the City's sidewalks and curbs are not being maintained well and are not ADA-compliant. Related comments surrounding streetscape improvements and the need for a better tree canopy in many areas of town were also mentioned.

Economy:

Citizens felt that the Chamber of Commerce and the City are doing a good job in attracting the new tech companies like Entegris and Amazon that have been making headlines, and of course, keeping Space Command. Concerns were raised, however, about the lack of affordable housing reducing our ability to attract new companies and jobs.

Housing / Development:

The need for more affordable housing in Colorado Springs was raised, with many expressing support for more affordable rental and ownership options. Specific comments were made that the City needs more condos and smaller options for people to be able to enter homeownership to build wealth.

Downtown's flexible zoning being good for economic vitality was mentioned. Support for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and short-term rentals was also voiced, but citizens suggested that newer developments need to be more focused on walkability, 'smart development', and historic preservation.

City Governance / Administration:

Many supported more funding to the City's Parks Department, as well as Forestry services to provide better tree canopies. Several stated that the City's website is difficult to navigate and 'needs a facelift'.

Schools / Education:

Feedback was relatively light on schools and education, but the need for better job training and workforce development was raised. The need for more childcare services was also mentioned, as in other listening sessions, and the idea was suggested that HOAs should not be allowed to prevent home childcare services to boost the number of providers available.

A shoutout ('kudos') was given to the Downtown Partnership for its Art on the Streets program.

Full Notes:

Organized by topic; asterisk (*) indicates sentiment repeated

Topic: Public Safety & Homelessness

- Good to see resources being spent on transitional housing near Las Vegas and Nevada Ave., specifically for women and women with children who are facing homelessness.
- City still needs more shelters for women and children.
- Support funding for the new police academy; work on messaging to convince voters.
- City needs to work on cleaning parks and waterways downtown from homelessness / camping, especially parks where children play.
- Can the City have a program for homeless individuals to make money by helping to clean public parks and open spaces?
- City needs a daytime homeless shelter, not just overnight shelters.
- Need more mental health and social support services, not more police or policing.
- Police and 911 response times are not good but "quantity does not equal quality".***
- Domestic violence is on the rise, lack of resources for victims.

- Get rid of American Medical Response and have Colorado Springs Fire Department take over.
- Illegal camping is a major problem 'by Arteris & 8th Street Apartments'.
- Should have mental health specialists / therapists go on calls with police officers.
- Too many roadways being used for street racing.
- Expand the Homeless Outreach Team.
- Use social workers for non-emergency situations like Denver.
- Prioritize retention of police officers.

Topic: Infrastructure & Utilities

- Mayor should host an infrastructure-specific listening tour.
- City needs to centralize trash and recycling; too many service companies.***
- Need better public transportation system.**
- Need better ADA access to public transportation.
- Buses need to be cleaner, safer.
- Lack of walkability is hurting lower income individuals, preventing creation of 'community'.*
- Need to implement more 'smart traffic' solutions.
- Create more bike-friendly infrastructure.*
- 'Love Colorado Springs Utilities – appreciate their efforts for water conservation and environmental friendliness'.
- Public transportation 'doesn't reach Powers'; need better routes around the city.
- City's sidewalks and curbs are not being maintained, not ADA-compliant.*
- Use more roundabouts, roundabouts help slow down people who speed.
- Need better snow removal response time.
- More efforts to improving potholes, bike lanes, bike paths.

Topic: Economy

- Chamber of Commerce doing good work in getting Amazon, Entegris, etc.
- Cost of housing is hurting City's ability to attract businesses, jobs.
- Space Force / Command staying is big win for the City.

Topic: Housing / Development

- Development needs to be more 'walkable' in newer areas – mix residential with commercial.
- Downtown's flexible zoning is good for economic vitality.
- Promote Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)-friendly policies to help with affordable housing.
- Need affordable housing for teachers, services workers, first responders.
- Reduce short-term rental regulations and get rid of 50-foot rule to encourage tourism.
- More needs to be done to address affordable housing in general.*
- Need both affordable renting options and affordable ownership options.
- Need more condos / smaller residential ownership buildings.
- Developers 'aren't held accountable for impact on entire City and they need to be'.
- Focus on 'smart development and historic preservation'.*
- Add neighborhood signage for aesthetic value / historic preservation.

Topic: City Governance / Government Administration

- Does the city have a grant-writing office dedicated to getting funding from the state, federal government and philanthropic community?*
- City needs to communicate better – use TV, radio, billboards, not just website.
- Use app or other platform to better communicate list of roads being worked on and their priority/order.**
- City Forestry needs to improve greenery on roadways around town – ‘every street should look like Nevada [in Old North End]’.
- City website ‘could use a facelift’; difficult to navigate.**
- Increase funding to Forestry Department – need more trees around city, ensure they stay alive by watering them.
- SE neighborhoods need more tree canopy.
- City ‘needs to be more human and less AI’.
- Elected officials are doing a good job of being accessible to citizens.
- Increase funding for parks.

Topic: Schools / Education / Arts:

- Increase access to job training / workforce services.
- HOAs should not be allowed to restrict childcare services.
- ‘Kudos to the Downtown Partnership and Art on the Streets program’.
- Great appreciation for the Pikes Peak Library District.

Topic: Other

- Work with CONO to organize a citywide clean up / volunteer day and try to get employers to give employees time to participate.
- Need more access to Department of Human Services / case management services. Prohibitive to only have one location on Garden of the Gods.
- Need more security at parking lot at Colorado Springs Airport.
- City needs ‘broader brand’ than just Olympic City USA.
- Palmer statue is ‘traffic hazard / death trap’.
- Require garbage trucks to drive with the beds closed while driving through town.
- Add snowplows to garbage trucks.