



2023 Listening Tour with Mayor Yemi & City Council District 1 Feedback Summary Report

Overview: This report provides a summary of all of the feedback captured at the District 1 Listening Session with Councilmember David Leinweber (At-Large) at Coronado High School on Sept. 1. Feedback received from this session does not necessarily reflect feedback solely from residents who live in District 1.

Summary:

Public Safety & Homelessness:

Participants almost universally named homelessness as a top safety issue, with most asking for better enforcement of existing anti-camping laws, a reduction in panhandling, and better clean-up of camps and trash in City parks. Several also mentioned the need for better mental health support services, including veterans care.

Most stated that CSPD is short-staffed and suggested it might face issues with morale and retention, with many suggesting that better pay would help boost retention rates. Support for a new police training academy was mixed – several expressed support while others questioned whether an academy would fix the staffing and retention issues. In this district, several also voiced concerns about use of force by the police, and there were some requests for an independent committee to hold police accountable and boost community relations efforts.

Infrastructure & Utilities:

In District 1, requests for better public transportation services – particularly regional services – were mentioned far more frequently than requests to fix potholes or sidewalks. Support for Front Range Rail services was apparent, with many mentioning Front Range Rail directly or indirectly (for example, by requesting 'a train to Denver'). Support was also voiced for more multi-modal transportation options and a better network of public transportation and bike lanes throughout the City. New PikeRide stations in residential neighborhoods were requested.

Many suggested that Colorado Springs is too reliant on cars, or 'addicted to cars', as many phrased it. Several people suggested that new development, especially denser development, or affordable housing development, should not be green-lighted by Planning without public transport options being included. Smaller buses were proposed to save money on vehicles and fuel than being used to expand the network of routes.

As far as roadways are concerned, many people stated that the Powers corridor needs work and was 'not delivered as promised.' People wrote that Powers should be more like an eastern alternative to I-25 with

more flyovers / overpasses and less stoplights. The City's lack of east-west transit corridors was also a common concern.

Economy:

Nearly all tables at the District 1 meeting voiced support for increasing the Lodgers and Automobile Rental Tax (LART), with several suggesting that the additional funds be used for infrastructure projects. Support for 'Olympic City' branding and messaging was strong, although there were also a few detractors.

Most felt that the City is not doing enough to retain young professionals or recruit employers and create new jobs that are accessible to those not in high tech fields or those without a security clearance. As in a few other District meetings, several suggested that the City is too reliant on the military and defense-sector employers for economic growth and job opportunities – citizens are asking for a more diverse range of job opportunities and employers.

Many wrote that the City needs to work to build a grocery store to serve the growing downtown residential population, and several voiced support for the economic growth and opportunities created by the amphitheater project on the north side of the City.

Housing / Development:

One of the strongest themes to come out of this topic was the need for ownership opportunities (i.e., condo buildings) downtown instead of just rental properties. As in other listening sessions, the need for more affordable housing was also a top concern.

Most individuals at the District 1 listening session expressed support for greater density downtown, and opposition to continued suburban growth and sprawl. The phrase 'build up, not out' was written several times. Relatedly, many felt that master planned communities in suburban areas were too car-centric and not enough was being done by City Planning to encourage multi-modal transit options and the integration of public transportation.

Several wrote that the Creek COS plan, or the redevelopment of Monument Creek, was a project that the City should pursue in earnest to boost economic growth and increase tourism.

City Governance / Administration:

Many people wrote that the City needs to boost funding to the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department – several wrote that the City never returned funding to pre-recession levels.

The next most common sentiment was surrounding City communications – many requested that the city focuses on more 'inclusive' communications and marketing that makes it feel like 'Colorado Springs is welcoming to all.'

Many suggested that the City do something for the City Auditorium to find or generate funding to move the project forward, including suggestions of a ballot initiative to retain tax revenue, bonds, or other public financing.

Several also voiced concerns about the transparency of the City Planning Department. Some residents asked for more transparency and/or tools to track metrics on infrastructure projects like road and sidewalk repairs and new construction, including suggestions that a more equitable approach to prioritizing projects was needed.

Schools / Education:

There were not many comments regarding schools and education, other than a few remarks that early childhood education and affordable childcare options were lacking in Colorado Springs, a request for more trade schools, and a comment that the downtown library is 'overrun' with homeless individuals.

Other Topics:

There were a few site-specific requests in this category, such as a few requests for better noise enforcement at Weidner Field and a request that the former quarry on the westside be turned into a public open space. A few suggested that Colorado Springs has 'too many "Citizens Against Everything"', as it was phrased, and that the City could do more to rally public support for development and taxes to support infrastructure projects.

Full Notes:

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

Topic: Public Safety & Homelessness

- Homelessness is on the rise, need CSPD and other services to help/enforce laws.****
- Mental health issues need to be better addressed, including veterans' services.**
- Citizens need to be able to provide more feedback / commentary on solutions for homelessness.
- CSPD needs more officers, better training.****
- CSPD needs better pay (boost retention).*
- CSPD provided 'respectful and positive response during Club Q shooting' incident.***
- Need for more equitable access to CSPD support, services.
- CSPD needs to collaborate more with the public, neighborhoods, and non-profits.
- Neighborhoods need better fire mitigation / evacuation procedures / egress options.**
- DARE (drug use prevention) is outdated; different, modern approaches are needed.
- 'Scare tactics' for drug use prevention don't work.
- Scared to use public trails in some areas of town.
- Homeless Outreach Program and Homeless Outreach Team teams are too small.*
- Police need to focus more on de-escalation, not use of force.**
- 'What will a new training center solve if we still have low police salaries, retention rates?'
- Need an independent 'citizens police advisory committee' to ensure police are accountable and assure community that they are being heard.**
- CSPD does not respond or follow up on non-emergency calls.
- City needs a safe gun storage awareness campaign.
- 'Build another tiny home community for homeless individuals'.

Topic: Infrastructure & Utilities

- Fix roadways (potholes).*

- Major traffic corridors don't have sufficient capacity.
- Need more public transportation.***
- Boost residential solar.
- Good economic growth in city, but infrastructure not keeping up.***
- Public transportation options need to be better (cleaner, more efficient, nicer) to incentivize more use.
- City is 'too addicted to cars' – need comprehensive public transportation throughout city.*****
- Need more bike-friendly lanes, infrastructure.**
- Sad that City Auditorium project is not moving forward (see additional comment regarding a ballot initiative).
- Need a 'regional' comprehensive public transit system for Front Range.*****
- Better participation in Front Range Rail projects.*****
- Expand PikeRide to more neighborhoods.**
- Use smaller buses to service more routes.**
- Powers Corridor needs more overpasses / less stoplights / alternative to I-25.****
- City curbs and sidewalks are not in good condition.
- Colorado Springs Utilities is 'good at public relations.'
- City needs light rail.
- 'Love free bus days'.*
- 'Hate traffic pattern on the bridge over Fillmore'.
- City needs unified municipal waste company / plan.
- City needs recycling centers / better recycling options.
- 'We need higher taxes to fund better infrastructure'.
- Need better east – west transit options.
- 'Stormwater control is good in Austin Bluffs neighborhood'.

Topic: Economy

- 'Olympic City' going well for Colorado Springs.
- Increase Lodgers and Automobile Rental Tax (LART) for use on better infrastructure.****
- Need greater diversity in economic & job opportunities.****
- Flights out of Colorado Springs are more expensive, not enough choice in destinations.**
- Good economic growth in the city, but infrastructure not keeping up (also under infrastructure).
- Colorado Springs needs to be 'economically viable' for people who don't have a car.
- Focus on ways to retain younger population.**
- Hard to stay in Colorado Springs at current median-income level.
- Invest in 'quality of life' to attract more national, international companies.
- Over-reliance on natural resources ('i.e., God') to attract jobs and people; invest more in downtown and other cultural offerings.
- City is bad at retaining young professionals / civilians.**
- Need jobs 'for regular people too, not just high income, tech, and military'.**
- Need grocery store downtown.**
- Shortage of trade workers.
- New amphitheater up north will be good for economy.

Topic: Housing / Development

- Support incentives for environmentally friendly development / xeriscaping.
- Have requirements and/or incentives for solar on new commercial construction.
- City needs to better protect natural resources from development.
- Need more parks in northern and southeastern parts of the city.
- 'Master Planned Development' too car-centric, not focused enough on public transportation. greenways, trails, biking infrastructure, and city approach is outdated.****
- Need condos and ownership opportunities downtown, not just rentals.*****
- Need more options for families downtown, not just 'singles with \$100k+ income'.
- Need more fast-food options downtown, but too much in other areas of the city.
- Need to be 'heavily in favor of infill to reduce suburban sprawl'.****
- Need to be 'in favor of going up'.
- Need more affordable housing communities.****
- Require developers to have % of units be affordable.
- Short term rentals hurting housing affordability.*
- Use COS Creek Plan to bring more development, tourism to downtown.***
- Development should be water-restricted.

Topic: City Governance / Government Administration

- Restore parks, recreation, and cultural services budget to pre-recession levels.***
- Provide equitable distribution of parks and parks services throughout the city.**
- Provide transparency on how / why city makes decisions on what roads to build, fix, etc. and provides updates / metrics for tracking.**
- City communications / marketing needs rebrand to look more like a 'city' than a 'small town'.
- City communications should emphasize / highlight revitalized areas more.
- City communications should emphasize being a 'Welcoming City to All People' more / more inclusive comms.*****
- City needs to figure out a way to stop being viewed as very tax adverse.
- Put forward a ballot initiative to fund City Auditorium.***
- Put forward city bonds to fund City Auditorium.
- Need more city-funded dog parks, not just HOAs/neighborhood ones.**
- Need more transparency from City Planning.
- Salary City Council to make it more accessible / equitable for people to serve.

Topic: Schools / Education:

- Need more childcare providers.**
- Need more trade schools.
- downtown Library is too overwhelmed by homeless individuals.

Topic: Other

- Colorado Springs is a 'great place to raise a family'.
- Do more to be known as 'Olympic City' (and more) and not 'hate city' as in the past.
- We have way too many 'Citizens Against Everything'.

- Garden of the Gods roadways need a dedicated bike lane.
- Enforce late night noise ordinance at Weidner Field.
- City needs to fund more youth sports options.
- Need more code enforcement on 'absentee' landlords.
- 'Olympic City' – but sporting events need to be promoted and more public and available.
- Reclaim the old mining quarry on the west side as publicly accessible open space.
- 'Not Olympic City just because they train here'.