



## 2023 Listening Tour with Mayor Yemi & City Council District 3 Feedback Summary Report

**Overview:** This report provides a summary of all of the feedback captured at the District 3 Listening Session with Councilmember David Leinweber (At-Large) at Hillside Community Center on Aug. 18, 2023. Feedback received from this session does not necessarily reflect feedback solely from residents who live in District 3.

### **Summary:**

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

CSPD response times and issues surrounding homelessness were of top concern for many at the District 3 Listening Tour. Some site-specific concerns were raised more than once, including concerns for homeless issues and safety at downtown parks like Monument Valley Park and Dorchester Park, and other sites that are frequently home to camps. Citizens also expressed support for a new police training academy, but also voiced a need for better training regarding mental health services and relations with minority communities. Police accountability to the community was raised more than once as well.

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

One of the most frequent comments related to infrastructure at the District 3 Listening Tour was that the City's sidewalks and curbs, particularly in some downtown areas, were not being well maintained, do not even exist in some areas, and are generally not ADA friendly because of poor conditions and a 'spotty network' (blocks that lack sidewalks entirely). As in other listening sessions, the East-West roadway options were also identified as a problem, and many expressed their frustration with potholes and poor road conditions. A substantial amount of commentary also focused on the need to increase public transportation options and funding, with many saying that some areas of the City are left out of the network and that they feel existing public transportation is confusing, hard to access, and not always safe. Many also expressed support for a rail network to connect Colorado Springs to the rest of the Front Range.

Regarding utilities, many comments focused on green energy but from different angles. Some voiced that the City needed to invest in more solar and other renewable energy options, while others wanted the City to better communicate what investments and programs were already underway. Trash and recycling (lack thereof) were also mentioned many times – the need for recycling options downtown was brought up several times.

Many citizens also brought up the desire for better parks funding; several specifically called out the City for 'not funding the parks department beyond 2007/2008 levels.' As urbanization increases (and some comments indicated that density is favored over sprawl), access to trails and open spaces were called out as very important to District 3. Several also asked for safe, clean public restrooms in downtown.

## **Economy:**

One of the more frequently repeated comments listed under the 'economy' focus area was the need for a downtown grocery store – downtown was referred to as a 'food desert' in multiple comments. As development increases downtown, concerns over gentrification, the need for more affordable housing, the increasing cost of living, and growing income inequality were all clearly hot topics. Several also expressed support for increasing LART to help pay for better City services and infrastructure.

## **Housing / Development:**

Many expressed the opinion that development is outpacing the City's ability to provide required supportive services and infrastructure. As in the first session, competing and somewhat mutually exclusive comments were raised here as well – many expressed support for more affordable housing options and recognize the need for it, but are also concerned that developers are not fulfilling promises to create parks and green spaces, aren't building in ways that conserve water, and are outpacing supportive infrastructure. Perhaps something more specific to the needs of District 3 was the comment that AirBnBs and other short-term rentals are removing the stock of affordable housing and driving up costs.

## **City Governance / Administration:**

Many felt that City communications could be improved – some expressed that the City needs to better communicate long-term visions for development, sustainability, and climate change. Others felt that City-run websites and apps were not very user friendly, and still others felt that city communications rely too heavily on tech / social media platforms and are not senior-friendly or friendly for people who prefer more traditional forms of communication. The need for more multi-lingual communications from the City was also mentioned.

## **Schools / Education:**

Citizens expressed support for universal preschool, and many voiced concerns over teacher pay and duties. Several felt that teachers are getting burnt out by having to simultaneously teach and be social workers to meet the needs of their students.

## **Other Topics:**

Many expressed their love for events held downtown – they felt represented and a part of the community through attending events that highlight diversity and inclusion. Several commented on their love for artwork, murals, and sculptures downtown. A couple commentators expressed that they noticed a 'generational divide' in what people thought were the most pressing issues for the City, although they did not communicate which issues specifically seemed more important to certain 'generations' than others.

## **Full Notes:**

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

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

- Existing homeless shelters are not safe; users are 'scared into silence.'
- City needs a 'grievance procedure' for feedback/complaints about homelessness.
- Homeless outreach program run by the Fire Department is doing good work.
- 911 wait times are unacceptable.\*\*\*

- Homeless camps get cleaned up, but then quickly show up again at same sites.\*\*
- Off-leash dogs are dangerous to pedestrians, there have been dog attacks from off-leash dogs on school grounds.\*\*
- Citadel Mall is unsafe.
- Need mental health focused response team to deal with homelessness issues.\*
- Expand police academy.\*\*
- Need more police presence along 'nightlife' blocks of Tejon.
- Homeless camping in Monument Park and parks in Old Colorado City leading to people not using parks.\*
- 'Noise pollution' from non-compliant cars, motorcycles a major nuisance.
- Like the idea of tiny home villages to help with homelessness.
- Some homeless don't want to use existing shelters because of relationship w/ partner, having a pet, etc., which shelter rules don't allow.
- Petty crime (vandalism, graffiti) downtown Colorado Springs is a problem for businesses.
- Police should be required to keep 'running lights on' in their vehicles at night.
- Need mental health hospitals / institutions back.
- Police should feel empowered but must be held accountable – racism / trauma from police killings in the community is real and doesn't just go away.\*\*
- Strategically locate a Westside Homeless Outreach Center to create a resource center that would offer a warm space in the winter, on-staff nurse, mental health services, food distribution orgs. like Food to Power.

**Topic: Infrastructure & Utilities**

- Create community benefit agreement for Mill Street neighborhood related to decommissioning of Drake.\*
- Build affordable housing, community center on Drake site.
- Sidewalks downtown need improvement / repair / better ADA access and 'walkability'.\*\*\*\*\*
- Free mass transit (ZEB) is very beneficial.
- Bathrooms needed at public parks / spaces downtown.\*\*
- Create more public awareness about energy efficiency improvements / green energy initiatives.\*\*\*
- Need better recycling options, especially downtown.\*\*\*
- Water conservation should be prioritized in new development plans.\*
- Ensure that developers deliver on promised parks & park funding.
- Potholes are major problem throughout the city.\*\*\*\*
- Cleanup needed along Fountain Creek, want COS Creek plan to go through.\*
- East-west connectivity is lacking.\*\*\*\*
- Need better senior centers throughout the city.\*\*
- Need rail-based public transportation options, more public transit in general.\*\*\*
- Need rail connection north-south along I-25 & Front Range.\*\*
- West side of city needs better stormwater drainage.
- City public transit is too confusing and not well funded.\*
- Have more programs to help lower-income residents afford energy saving goods, greener energy.
- City buses need to be cleaner / feel safer.
- City needs to improve alleyways downtown and along S. Nevada for pedestrian safety.
- Invest in more solar power production, sustainability in general.\*\*\*

- Public transit is ‘incomplete’ – some areas of town are completely inaccessible by public transit.
- Do not allow overhead power lines to cut across Concrete Couch property / downtown Colorado Springs.
- Reimagining the Old Colorado City Interurban Railway – the City needs improved public mass transit, including trams.
- Develop habitable spaces, including wooden structures in residential areas with walkable zones constructed close along the street.

**Topic: Economy**

- downtown / city doing a good job of promoting arts / creative sector.
- Continue to build strong relationship with Chamber of Commerce.
- Increasing income inequality, especially for service / hourly workers.
- Workforce development center needs city’s support.
- Expand offerings at COS Airport to keep up with population growth.
- Need grocery store downtown Colorado Springs.\*\*\*\*\*
- Re-vitalization of downtown Colorado Springs is appreciated; need similar plans for S. Nevada corridor.
- Advertise ‘Olympic City’ more to bring tourists in.
- Cost of living getting too high.\*\*
- Bring in more jobs relevant to younger generations; need more non-military jobs.\*
- Attention downtown Colorado Springs is good, but too much gentrification is making it expensive.
- Small businesses need more support / attention from the city.
- Raise LART to help fund city services / infrastructure.

**Topic: Housing / Development**

- AirBnBs / short term rentals depleting affordable housing stock.
- New apartments are not affordable / need more truly affordable housing.\*\*
- City needs to re-evaluate annexation policies, particularly regarding water concerns.
- Require developers to fund parks.\*\*
- “Too much building for fire safety.”
- Need more senior-only affordable housing.
- City needs to do more to encourage density instead of sprawl.

**Topic: City Governance / Government Administration**

- Parks funding has not been restored beyond 2007 levels, need to increase funding.\*\*\*
- Need better communication from the City on future development plans, including long-term plans.
- City needs to communicate what it is doing to address climate change.\*\*
- City vehicle fleet needs to be more electric / environmentally friendly.
- Citizens, not just City Council, should vote on annexations.
- Obtaining permits takes too long and is confusing.
- PPRBD needs accountability / oversight.
- City websites / app interfaces are not good.

**Topic: Schools / Education:**

- Preschool access for all is a good thing.

- Community / civic education is not being taught; “community structures dissolving.”
- Upgrade Pioneers Museum.
- Need more elementary schools.
- Teachers getting burnt out from having to be both teachers and social workers.\*\*

**Topic:** Other

- Create a ‘landlord registry’ for multi-family residential buildings.
- Good that the city is hosting / promoting community events for a diverse range of people.\*\*\*
- Noticeable ‘generational difference’ present in what people view as city’s problems.
- Need citywide trash alignment – no need for 5 different providers.
- Love all the artwork / sculptures / activities downtown Colorado Springs.\*
- Need more events for seniors downtown Colorado Springs.
- Older residents need city to communicate without relying too heavily on tech platforms (i.e., communicate in ways that are more traditional).
- Need more non-English communication from the City government.