

City of Westminster City Council Town Hall
May 18, 2023
Answers to Questions Submitted for the Town Hall

***Please note that the recording of the May 18 Town Hall can be found here:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qo_sIV1qImM.

Public Safety:

Q: Thornton has banned panhandling! Let us do this in Westminster. And if not, why not? It seems like a reasonable thing to do.

A: Thornton has not yet banned panhandling, due to a pending federal court case that thus far has ruled that such an action would be unconstitutional. That said, in Westminster, there is a new ordinance banning individuals and signs from medians less than four feet wide, to ensure the safety of our pedestrians and motorists.

Q: What is being done about the constant drag racing in our City?

A: Street racing is a regional challenge. For that reason, the Westminster Police Department (WPD) continues to take a multi-dimensional approach to combat street racing. One critical element of WPD's strategy involves collaborating closely with other Denver metro police agencies, including the North Metro Speed Enforcement Group and the Colorado Department of Public Safety-managed Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC). WPD also partners with the Colorado State Patrol, which dedicates resources on targeted nights based on past criminal activity. We believe that this type of intelligence-based, multi-jurisdictional enforcement will help deter reckless driving.

In addition to multi-jurisdictional collaboration, WPD is dedicating resources towards enhancing the Department's ability to reconstruct criminal activity after it occurs and more effectively track down suspects. As you know, racing clubs often organize themselves on social media at a moment's notice, making it difficult to predict when they will engage in illegal activities. That said, by strictly enforcing Westminster's no-tolerance policy for racing and minor -- but often related -- infractions such as cracked windshields, altered suspensions, and modified exhausts, we hope to make a dent in the local speed racing culture. The goal is to establish and grow Westminster's reputation "on the street" as a less attractive location for street racing.

City Council has approved on first reading new ordinances which will allow municipal prosecution of criminal conduct including joyriding, unauthorized removal of motor vehicle parts, and motor vehicle trespass. Council has also taken the first step toward approving a new restitution ordinance for victims of crime, updating how the City impounds vehicles, and a civil nuisance abatement process to address motor vehicles used in criminal activities including street racing.

WPD is also exploring implementing more structural impediments to street racing through lane closures, parking lot closures, etc. Over the years, CIAC and other north metro agencies have developed greater intelligence and insight into how the larger Denver-area racing clubs operate.

Over time, this is helping WPD, and other agencies proactively interdict illegal activity more often.

Q: What are you doing about speeding on W. 92nd Avenue?

A: Please see above answer.

Q: What is the plan to reduce chronic speeding on Independence Street?

A: Please see above answer.

Economic Development:

Q: Can you provide an update on the W. 73rd Ave./Lowell Blvd. development project?

A: The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has requested a full environmental assessment of the site before any work can be done. Staff is currently working through that process. Once completed, staff will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) from third parties to create a community event space and open-air market.

Q: Why doesn't Downtown Westminster look more like Downtown Arvada, with restaurants, breweries, and shops?

A: The full build-out of downtown will take 15-20 years, as we are investing in the long-term future of our City, and we appreciate community members' patience as this process unfolds. Many restaurants based in our Downtown opened during the pandemic, and they have faced challenges as they have grown their business. That said, we agree with you, there is a strong desire to create an experiential and vibrant retail and restaurant environment in our Downtown. For that reason, staff is committed to supporting our developers' efforts to attract more restaurants and retail in our Downtown. The good news is that our developers have already leased more than 70 percent of available space in the Downtown area, and we expect more restaurants and retail offerings soon.

Q: Downtown Westminster has many vacant stores. Why are City leaders trying so hard to convince residents that Downtown Westminster is a success?

A: Please see the above answer.

Public Works and Utilities:

Q: Voters put you in office to rein in costs. Why are we spending all this money on a treatment plant when we have one already that would cost less to retrofit?

A: The existing Semper Water Treatment Plant will continue to be an important part of the City's infrastructure into the future. As a part of the water treatment plant project, there will be upgrades to key portions of that facility including

electrical and structural upgrades. That said, portions of Semper have reached the end of their useful life and must be replaced. While a retrofit is possible, the thorough evaluation of the plant that was completed as a part of the recent process shows that the existing infrastructure has a limited life expectancy and has limitations in its ability to treat various challenging water conditions.

After a thorough evaluation of Semper and alternatives to the then-proposed Water 2025 project, a solution was identified that saves the City \$100 million from the original proposal.

In April, the City Council approved this right-sized water treatment facility option. It will be built on forty acres along the east side of Westminster Boulevard north of W. 98th Avenue and will replace those portions of Semper that have aged beyond their useful life and will have robust capacity to meet future state and federal clean water regulations and respond to challenging water conditions such as those caused by wildfire contamination.

This new water treatment project follows a year-long re-evaluation of the original Water2025 project. This option provides substantial cost savings and will ensure the community continues to have clean, safe, and affordable drinking water for generations to come. The water rate structure approved by City Council in 2022 incorporates the necessary funding for the right-sized water treatment plant option.

Q: Can you please improve the appearance of the median in front of King Soopers on W. 104th Avenue?

A: The median on 104th Ave from Grove Street to Federal Blvd is currently stamped concrete. This median is not wide enough to improve the appearance with landscaping/xeriscaping. Stamped concrete is the best choice at this time for the median. Any new or future changes will be determined through Community Development.

Q: What is the status of the water pressure improvements being done for the communities along Westminster Boulevard, north of W. 92nd Avenue?

A: The City's ability to change pressures along W. 92nd Avenue, unfortunately, are limited. That said, there is a project planned here in the next 6 months to move the few sections that can be moved on to a part of the system at a higher pressure. The areas that will see improved pressure are between Westminster Boulevard and Highway 36 up to W. 95th Avenue. This includes Madison Hill, Franklin Square, and Tuscany Trails. The increase in pressure should be between 15 and 20 pounds per square inch.

Q: With ongoing drought and climate change, what steps are you taking to better offer native Colorado grasses and build resiliency?

A: The City of Westminster has financially incentivized the reduction of outdoor water use and replacement of lawns with more CO-friendly plantings for our customers since 2005. Our two

current programs are called [Garden in a Box](#), offering a \$25.00 dollar discount on plant-by-number garden kits, and [Lawn Replacement](#), offering up to \$750 to remove turf grass and replace it with low-water use plants. In addition, our Parks, Recreation, and Libraries department has removed over twenty acres of high-water-use turf grass and replaced it with low-water varieties over the past few years at public parks and public facilities. The City is also actively evaluating a large landscape turf removal incentive program that could be used by Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) and business parks.

Q: How is the City implementing "Green Infrastructure Projects" that cost less and are more efficient than "1970's-era infrastructure?"

A: The City has a robust water supply plan that incorporates the entire City's planned development at build-out. It accounts for land uses in developed and undeveloped land alike. It also incorporates climate change and conservation trends. The City has a robust water supply that can support both today's water needs, and the future water needs of the City.

Although the Semper Water Treatment Plant will be updated and utilized to an extent, it would have been more expensive over the long-term to keep depending on the Semper Treatment Plan than build a new plant, given the age of the plant and the fact that there are parts of the plant that are past their useful lifespan. Continuing to depend on the Semper Water Treatment Plan also would have resulted in less reliable, less robust infrastructure in the shorter-term.

Q: Does the process for allocating the City's remaining water taps in the development process – as we get closer to full build-out – consider at each development's approval the future's remaining projects, or is it first come, first served? That is, will the City reserve water taps (reserved) for the last developer even if near-term developments must make do with fewer taps?

A: The City's Water Supply Plan accounts for all possible future projects in the City. The Plan evaluated the potential future projects on a spectrum from minimal to maximum water use to make sure we understand the implications of either "extreme." The most likely future is in the middle of those two bookends. While it is true that developers are offered taps on a first come first serve basis, City staff performs periodic check-ins to see how recent tap sales and water use compare with our water supply. It's why there is a Comp Plan/Water Supply Plan update every 5-10 years, with regular monitoring in between. An important finding of the last iteration of this planning process is that so long as development happens in line with the densities allowed in the approved Comp Plan, the City of Westminster has enough water for existing and future development. Rather than thinking in terms of the City must "reserve" water taps for the last developer, instead focus on the importance of approved developments following the Comp Plan. It is one of the important purposes of the Comp Plan. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan accounts for ongoing and future projects such as the Downtown area, the Uplands development, and the development around Westminster Station.

Q: What is the plan to improve the median area of W. 120th Avenue, between Federal Boulevard and Huron Street?

A: W. 120th Avenue is a state highway, and the median in this area is managed by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). City staff will follow up with our contacts with CDOT to attempt to facilitate maintenance services at this location.

Q: Does the City have a program to address the deteriorating and rusting bases of streetlamps and other poles along the City's streets?

A: The City Westminster partners with Xcel Energy as most of the street in the City of Westminster belong to Xcel Energy. Xcel Energy does go out and inspect streetlight poles each year to determine what needs to be replaced. If you have a specific light pole, please let us know and we can work with Xcel Energy to inspect and or repair the pole as needed. Please give the Streets Maintenance team a call at 303-658-2400, and we will do what we can to help.

General Services:

Q: I have heard there will be a new Courthouse. Will the project be the result of a competitive bid process or just another handout for a well-connected developer?

A: The City is absolutely committed to implementing an open and transparent contracting process, based on nationally recognized contracting best practices, if the proposed Courthouse construction process moves forward. City Council is looking closely at the requirements that all our Court users have for the new Courthouse, potentially in collaboration with outside partners like Community Reach.

Q: As a volunteer for Recycle Colorado, I have been impressed to learn about the benefits of composting. Are there plans to initiate a composting program?

A: The City is actively searching for a location for a centralized recycling site. We do not yet have an anticipated opening date, contingent on finding a suitable location. Services would include typical recycling, composting, and various hard-to-recycle options such as electronics, mattresses, paint, etc. Staff also recently provided information on social media for community members to connect with trash haulers that offer large-item pickup, and we are available to provide references to community members anytime. More information about composting is available here: <https://www.cityofwestminster.us/Residents/TrashRecycling/Compost>. There are private companies that offer composting services in Westminster and the surrounding areas.

Q: Could the City Council discuss bringing back large-item collection, or spring and fall curbside pick-up? Both Arvada and Broomfield have it.

A: The City recently put out a solicitation for large-item pickup, but we did not have any companies bid on it. That said, the City is committed to helping Westminster residents acquire large-item pickup services that meet their needs. We recently shared a list of local companies that offer the service and will provide more information to residents in the coming weeks about

how they can contract these services. Please call the City recycling team at 303-658-2332 if you would like us to send you this list. City staff is also exploring the possibility of partnering with a private hauler in the future, although the prospects for this type of partnership still need to be determined.

Q: What is the status of the transition to a single community-wide recycling location?

A: The City is actively searching for a location for the centralized recycling site. Unfortunately, we do not yet have an anticipated opening date, as this is contingent on finding a suitable location. Services would include common recycling, compost, and a variety of hard-to-recycle options such as electronics, mattresses, paint, etc.

Q: I think illuminating tall structures at night during bird migration is irresponsible, can you find another way of honoring students?

A: For the last several years, the City has lit up different buildings to honor graduating students. The City lists the schools we are lighting on our website or social media. We appreciate the feedback, even as we do want to ensure that we honor all those receiving diplomas this year.

Homelessness:

Q: What is the City's policy regarding homeless encampments? This is a growing problem. I understand that we need to address this compassionately; however, we have safety concerns.

A: Homelessness is a growing national and regional problem. While City staff is committed to doing what we can to reduce the rate of homelessness in our community, resolving this challenge will require regionally and locally based strategies.

The City's proactive approach is based on our Continuum of Compassion process, which you can read about here: <https://www.cityofwestminster.us/closures-delays/responding-to-people-experiencing-homelessness-in-a-compassionate-manner>. The City developed the Continuum of Compassion to address homelessness while balancing community needs and our responsibility to protect and preserve public lands. City Homeless Navigators use the Continuum of Compassion to build relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness and connect them with services and resources. From both a practical and philosophical perspective, we strongly believe that the Continuum of Compassion approach offers the best opportunity to reduce the incidence of homelessness in Westminster over the short and medium-term.

That said, please note that our Parks and Open Space team will not hesitate to take immediate action to address imminent health and safety risks to the community. This process involves first offering services to individuals experiencing homelessness. If services are available and refused, staff issues individuals experiencing homelessness trespass notices, per the Westminster Municipal Code, Title Thirteen, Chapter One, Section Five. After the mandated period for the individuals to comply with the trespass notice, the City may issue an abatement if the individuals do not comply with the trespass notice, escorting the individuals from the site if necessary. As

you might imagine, this process takes time, depending on multiple factors, including the availability of contracted services and the Police Department. Weather and mental health emergencies may affect this timeline and process.

In addition, there are legal impediments precluding swift enforcement of camping bans. In January 2021, the U.S. District Court of Colorado issued an injunction against the City of Denver's 2012 urban camping ban, except in cases where there are "evidence-based reasons to believe that a public health or safety risk exists." City staff is awaiting the outcome of this case, which is being appealed by the City of Denver in the Tenth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Please read the [Westword's history of Denver's urban camping ban](#) to understand the constraints City staff is operating under as we strive to protect the community and safeguard our parks and open spaces.

Again, we understand that this is a concerning issue for many community members and we are committed to partnering with the community to address this national and regional challenge, to the best of our ability. Please feel free to contact staff directly to report encampments via the "Report Homeless Encampments on Public Property" tab (under the "Parks and Recreation" category) on the [City's Access Westminster page](#) or by calling the Parks, Recreation, and Libraries Department at 303-658-2192.

Q: What is the City doing to clean up trash, debris, and feces left over from the homeless encampments on Little Dry Creek pathway and other parks and open spaces?

A: Once homeless encampments have been trespassed and abated, the City has an on-call contractor that comes to the site and removes all trash and debris that has accumulated. Parks, Recreation, and Libraries (PRL) staff is also trying to be proactive to encourage people experiencing homelessness (PEH) still living at sites on PRL owned properties who are working with our Navigators to keep their camps clean, handing out trash bags, and encouraging them to use designated drop sites for trash that our contractor then picks up on a weekly basis.

Parks, Recreation, and Libraries:

Q: What are the steps need to get a Committee together to develop a solution to open Standley Lake for safe recreational boating?

A: This is a challenging situation because the City has an Inter-Governmental Agreement with our neighbors, who – like us – draw water from Standley Lake. The current policy banning motorboats on the lake was instituted out of a concern about a Zebra mussel infestation. Any changes to the current policy prohibiting motor boating on Standley Lake would have to be negotiated with our neighbors. That said, resident-led task forces have developed recommendations that could allow safe boating on the lake, and we will continue to make efforts to talk to our partners about this issue.

Q: Can the City try to mitigate the prairie dog colony on Sheridan Boulevard and W. 98th Avenue? They lack natural predators and are damaging private property.

A: The City Open Space is managed in a natural state, including Prairie Dogs. There are natural predators, including coyotes and birds of prey (including Bald Eagles and other raptors). The State of Colorado allows private landowners to manage prairie dogs as they desire. The local HOA in this area also has the option to install Prairie Dog Barrier fencing on their land, and staff has provided them with contacts and resources for exploring that option.

Q: The open space along Sheridan Boulevard between W. 97th and W. 98th Avenues has a large prairie dog population that is destroying our landscaping. What is the City doing to help?

A: Please see the above answer.

Q: Why is the City wasting money on things like a clock tower in front of West View Recreation Center?

A: The clock tower is a cell phone tower, which is being installed to improve cellular service in the area. The cell tower operator is paying for the entirety of the cell tower construction and then will pay a monthly leasing fee to the City for 20 to 25 years, depending on the length of the first negotiated contract. Verizon and at least two other carriers will eventually utilize the tower.

Q: There was a survey months ago at Kings Mill Park about what should be built there in its renovation. What were the results of the survey and when/where will the new plan for the park be released?

A: The survey results were balanced in terms of support for both pickleball and tennis. City staff is still evaluating the survey results and will provide additional information to the community in the coming weeks.

Q: Is it possible to create a section of the Westminster Hills Open Space dog park that is fully fenced, or create a fully fenced dog park in existing space that is currently unused, such as the area that extends beyond Oakhurst Park?

A: The City is in the process of developing an area management plan for the Westminster Hills Open Space that will include recommendations for the future of off-leash use of the Open Space. City staff will keep community members informed and will provide opportunities for residents to provide input as this process moves forward.

Q: What is the City doing this year to control the spread of noxious weeds (state list "B" and "C") in the City's open spaces, easements, and rights-of-way?

A: The City has an active Integrated Pest Management program which is responsible for managing invasive species throughout Parks and Open Space. The priority of that program is complete eradication of class "A" species, as mandated by state law, and the control of class "B" and "C" species. To that end, the City has several active contracts for trailsides, parks and Open Space weed control, several staff members dedicated to those controls and 12 weeks of youth corps to remove Russian Olive and perform IPM management.

Community Development:

Q: What can the City do to help with noise pollution on Independence Drive?

A: We understand that many residents are concerned about traffic and noise on Independence Drive, and our Transportation Engineering Team is actively looking at possible measures to address the issue.

As you note, Independence Drive is classified as a Collector Roadway and is expected to carry more traffic than a local roadway but does not take the same amount as an arterial. For the last 30 years, the City has collected the average daily volumes on Independence Drive. Please see the history of the roadway volumes below; as you will see, the traffic volume peaked in 2017, according to the most recent data.

Date	1991	1996	2000	2003	2005	2007	2011	2017	2020	2021
Average Daily Trips	5600	6037	4808	4931	5914	4921	6811	7697	4005	5200

These volumes vary yearly but have averaged just above 5600 "volumes per day" (vpd). The 2020 study was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the numbers are lower than in 2017. During the speed study of 2021, the numbers increased. Though there has been a relatively small increase in the amount of traffic on Independence Drive, the volumes are far from the capacity for this roadway.

For comparison purposes, W. 88th Avenue near Independence Dr carries approximately 20,000 vpd. This is a major arterial and is designed to carry more traffic. Lowell Boulevard, north of W. 72nd Avenue, which runs directly through a residential neighborhood in Historic Westminster, carries approximately 14,000 vpd and is a collector roadway, so there are precedents for roadways such as Independence Drive to support more traffic.

Please note that the volume studies did not record vehicle types on the roadways, so Transportation Engineering cannot speak to commercial and construction traffic volumes. Throughout the City, Transportation Engineering has noticed an increase in delivery box trucks, moving vehicles, and tractor-trailers in our neighborhoods. The City does not prohibit these vehicles because often they serve our neighbors by helping to move in or out of a home, to deliver construction material for driveway reconstruction, remodeling, or roofing upgrades, for example.

We understand that many residents are interested in the possibility of the City building a noise barrier adjacent to Independence Drive. These types of barriers can be very costly and for the length of this roadway, could cost \$10 million or more from design to final completions. In the past, these improvements have typically funded by HOAs rather than the City. Of course, residents are always welcome to attend Public Hearings that will be held in September for the City's 2024 budget to request the City Council's consideration of this project.

Moving forward, the Transportation Engineering team is exploring the possibility of hiring a consultant to properly evaluate if traffic calming measures can or should be deployed and, if so, which traffic calming measures would be appropriate and effective. We are also compiling a distribution list of residents interested in Independence Drive developments and will continue to

update the community as this process unfolds. If you have additional questions, please feel free to follow up with City Transportation Engineer Heath Klein at hklein@cityofwestminster.us or 303-658-2103.

Q: What is the City doing to address the overwhelming amount of traffic on Independence Drive coming to Wadsworth Parkway? The construction work in Arvada has resulted in the traffic on Independence Street rising to an unbearable level.

A: Please see response above.

Q: What is the City planning to do to reduce the amount of traffic and speeds on Independence Drive between W. 88th Avenue and Wadsworth Boulevard?

A: Please see response above.

Q: What can the City do to calm traffic on Independence Drive between W. 88th Avenue and Wadsworth Boulevard? How can we change the street classification?

A: Please response above.

Q: In light of the substantial number of housing and other construction projects that have been approved, are water studies incorporated into the planning process for this growth?

A: This City Council is very committed to looking closely at water utilization when decided land-use decisions, and not build out the City beyond the water that we have here in Westminster. The City's newly approved Comprehensive Plan matches the amount of water that is available and provides a path forward for responsible development in line with our resources.

Q: Can the City use funding from the canceled extension of Chase Street over the Niver canal, connecting to the Walmart parking lot, to install more street lighting on the south side of W. 95th Place?

A: The City did not receive funding from the canceled extension of Chase Street over the Niver canal, which would have connected to the Walmart parking lot. This was a developer and development requirement that was waived due to the request of the neighborhood of Hyland Village. That said, staff can request additional street lighting along the south side of W. 95th Place.

Q: Is the city considering implementation of more flashing yellow or red traffic lights at certain intersections?

A: At this time, the City uses time-of-day programming for its signal timing and, in the evenings, runs the signals free. This means that minor streets, typically "red," would turn "green" upon detecting a vehicle intending to cross or turn left onto the major street. If there is a particular intersection that a resident would like the Transportation Engineer to evaluate for installation of flashing signals, please submit that to staff for consideration.

Q: When will the key issues on Federal Boulevard between W. 80th and W. 88th Avenues be addressed?

A: The Colorado Department of Transportation controls and maintains Federal Boulevard because it is a state highway. The Uplands developer will improve Federal Boulevard during the first construction phase, from W. 88th Avenue south to W. 83rd Avenue. The Uplands developer will provide curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and a signalized intersection at W. 86th Avenue and improve the signals at the W. 88th Avenue and W. 84th Avenue intersections.

Policy and Budget:

Q: What is the status of airplanes from the Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport flying over the Countryside neighborhood?

A: We understand the public's frustration with this issue. Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport (RMMA) is not managed by the City, although the City does have a seat on the Roundtable that provides feedback to RMMA. The Roundtable is working with RMMA representatives to see if the flight paths of aircraft originating from RMMA might be changed to require more flyovers of open space rather than residential neighborhoods.

Q: As a resident of Westminster for 30 years, and owner of our current home for 18 years, what is Westminster doing to address the increased noise from RMMA?

A: Please see above answer.

Human Resources:

Q: Who can we contact to put together a city-wide volunteer clean-up initiative along Little Dry Creek pathway?

A: Please contact the City's Volunteer Coordinator, Martha Heinz, at mheinz@cityofwestminster.us or 303-658-2089, to organize this initiative.

Q: What does the City plan to do to create more opportunities for people with disabilities?

A: The City of Westminster is a drug-free workplace and an Equal Opportunity Employer that values diversity and aims to have its workplace reflect the community. The city is committed to hiring any individual who can perform a job with or without reasonable accommodations, and individuals are encouraged to apply for any job for which they are qualified. In addition, the City follows the Colorado Equal Pay for Equal Work Act that requires open and transparent postings for all job opportunities. The Human Resources Department is currently reviewing its policies to determine the most effective way, in accordance with federal and state law, to provide hiring preference to both veterans and those with disabilities.