

Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS): Summary of City Council Questions

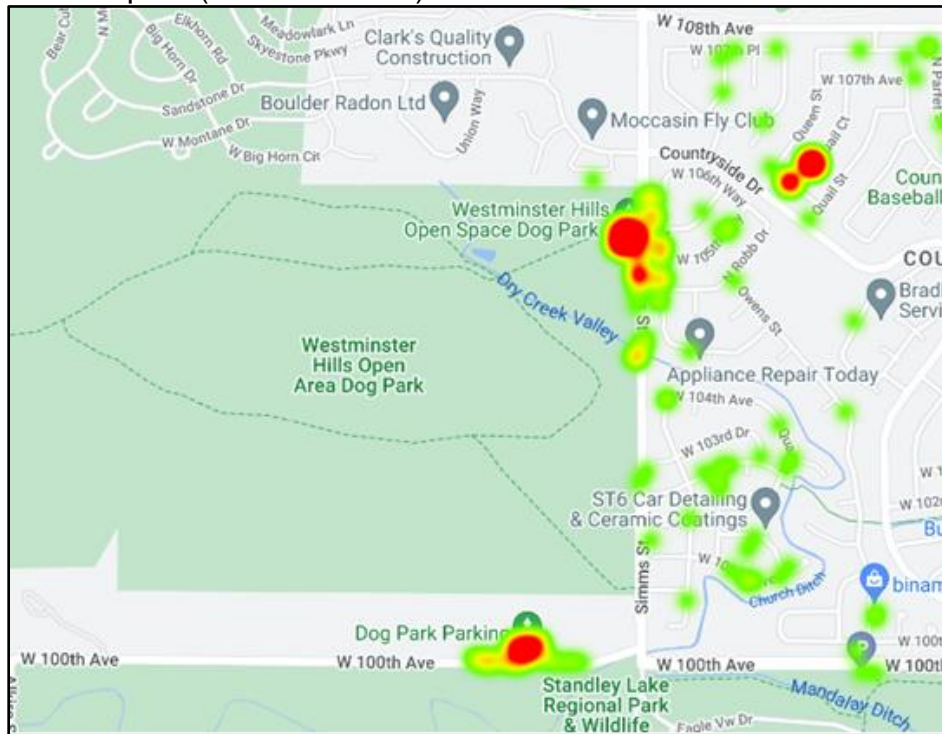
This report summarizes the key topics addressed at a recent meeting concerning Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS).

1. Parking Analysis

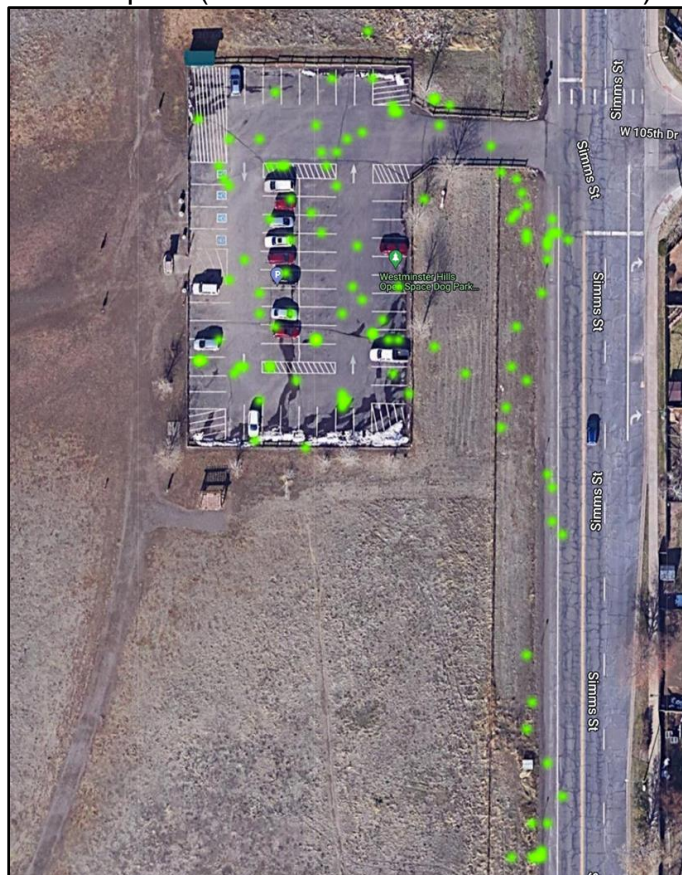
The City Council requested a comprehensive analysis of parking issues at WHOS. This analysis encompasses the following aspects:

- **Number of Parking Citations:** Staff conducted an analysis revealing 228 citations and 100 warnings issued in 2023 within and around WHOS. Examining a more recent timeframe (May 2023 - May 2024), the total number of citations issued climbed to 443. It is important to note that there is significant overlap in the data for the latter period due to its inclusion of data from May to December 2023.
- **Ticketing Trends:** Following enhanced "no parking" signage installations and increased weekend enforcement patrols, Parking Management observed:
 - Reduced complaints from the public.
 - Improved compliance with parking regulations.
 - A significant decrease in parking citations issued. There were only 3 complaints received in the first quarter of 2024 compared to 14 in the same period of 2023.
 - Installation details of new "no parking" signage along Simms Street, W. 100th Avenue, and W. 105th Drive.
- **Ticketing Details:**
 - A significant correlation exists between parking violations and high-usage periods, with the vast majority occurring on Saturdays during peak hours.
 - Violations on Simms Street and W. 100th Avenue primarily involve parking in designated "no parking" zones.
 - Most citations issued within parking lots are for improper parking (outside designated spaces) or involving vehicles with expired registration or licenses.
 - While specific details regarding location, time, and type of violation for each issued ticket are not included in this report (see Heat Maps #1, #2, and #3 below), these maps visually represent these details for 2023 within WHOS and on adjacent streets.

Heat Map #1 (WHOS – 2023):



Heat Map #2 (Simms Street – WHOS – 2023):



Heat Map #3 (W. 100th Avenue – WHOS – 2023):



- **Parking Enforcement Patrols:**

- Parking management patrols are conducted sporadically during weekdays, typically coinciding with broader parking enforcement efforts, complaints received, and calls for service throughout the city.
- Dedicated enforcement patrols occur every Saturday.
- While regular staffing is not maintained on Sundays, some limited enforcement activities have been conducted on those days utilizing overtime personnel.

- **Vehicle Residency:**

- An analysis of ticketed vehicles revealed that 90% belonged to non-residents, while the remaining 10% belonged to residents of Westminister.
- Over the past several months, enhanced “no parking” signage was installed along Simms Street from W. 107th Avenue/Countryside Drive to W. 100th Avenue. Enhanced “no parking” signage was also installed along W. 100th Avenue from the WHOS parking lot to Simms Street. In addition, “no parking” signage was installed along W. 105th Drive along with the following informational signs:



Metered Parking Program: Cost Analysis

Initial Capital Expenditure:

The initial capital expenditure for the implementation of the metered parking program is estimated at **\$17,354.10**. This cost includes the procurement and installation of pay stations.

Recurring Annual Costs (Year 2 and beyond):

Based on current projections, the estimated annual program cost for year 2 and beyond is **\$2,054.10**.

Pay Station Installation:

Installation of pay stations will require the creation of small concrete pads to ensure stability. These pads must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility guidelines.

Merchant Processing Fees:

The program will incur ongoing merchant processing fees, convenience fees, and transaction fees. These fees can be either absorbed by the City or passed on to the parking user.

Transaction Fee Structure:

Typical transaction fees range from **\$0.25 to \$0.35** per transaction. Additionally, various fee models exist that combine a percentage of the transaction amount with a flat fee.

Current Transaction Fee Structure:

The City's current fee structure for mobile and pay station transactions is **2.9%** of the transaction amount, plus a flat fee of **\$0.25**, with an additional **\$0.05** gateway fee per transaction.

Vendor Quotes:

A quote from one potential pay station vendor has been received. Quotes from two additional vendors are forthcoming.

2. Barbed Wire Removal at Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS)

The City Council previously inquired about the status of barbed wire removal efforts at WHOS.

Barbed Wire Fencing Identification

Staff has identified two distinct types of barbed wire fencing within WHOS:

- **Western Boundary (Indiana Street):** This fencing lies along the western border of WHOS, adjacent to Indiana Street. The City lacks authority to remove this fencing, as it falls under the jurisdiction of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).
- **Northern Boundary (Great Western Drive):** This fencing is situated along the northern boundary of WHOS, bordering Great Western Drive. However, this section falls within the jurisdiction of the City and County of Broomfield. Staff will initiate contact with Broomfield to explore potential replacement options for this specific fencing. (Please note, the fence in question is located behind the designated signage.)

Barbed Wire Piles

Staff did speak with the reporting parties regarding these piles, and after extensive searching, one pile of barbed wire was located and removed (see photo below). The reporting party has been given staff contact information and may reach out directly. The disturbed area has been reseeded.



3. Current Operating Budget for Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS)

The City Council sought details regarding the current operating budget specifically allocated to Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS). While our present budgeting system lacks the capability to track costs associated with individual properties, we can offer the following relevant information.

Open Space Operations and Budget

The City's Open Space Section employs five full-time staff members (1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) Foreperson, 3.0 FTE Open Space Stewards, 1.0 FTE Open Space Specialist-Natural Resources) responsible for maintenance and management across all Open Space properties, including WHOS. The total 2024 Open Space budget amounts to \$1,376,784, encompassing operational costs, personnel expenses, and capital improvement funds (CIP). This translates to an average cost of \$360.70 per acre of Open Space managed. Based on this cost per acre, the annual cost for the 470-acre Dog Off-Leash Area at WHOS would be approximately \$170,000. The estimated annual cost for the entirety of WHOS (1,050 acres) would be \$378,735.

WHOS Specific Costs (Estimates)

While a precise breakdown for WHOS is not currently available, we can provide estimations based on resource allocation:

- **Invasive Species Management:** Approximately 40% of our annual Integrated Pest Management (IPM) efforts are dedicated to controlling invasive species specifically at WHOS.
- **Trash Removal:** WHOS necessitates a dedicated amount of staff time for waste removal, comparable to the combined effort required for all other Open Space properties.

Future Enhancements

We are actively exploring methods to refine our budget tracking system, aiming to achieve a more granular cost allocation at the property level in the future. This refinement will allow us to provide more precise information on the specific operating budget for WHOS.

4. Staffing and Maintenance Plan for Cherry Creek and Chatfield Dog Off-Leash Areas (DOLAs)

Following the City Council's request for information on the staffing and maintenance plans for Cherry Creek and Chatfield dog off-leash areas (DOLAs), staff has initiated contact with the respective park administrators to gather details. This report provides a preliminary overview of the information obtained thus far.

Access Control and Fees

Both Cherry Creek and Chatfield DOLAs employ comprehensive access control measures. Visitors must pay general park admission fees, with an additional fee levied for DOLA access. Notably, both Cherry Creek and Chatfield implement a built-in capacity limitation based on available parking. Once the parking lot reaches full capacity, access to the DOLA is closed until spaces become available.

Fencing and Vegetation Management

Both DOLAs are fully enclosed by fencing. While Chatfield prioritizes off-leash use within the enclosed area, they dedicate limited resources to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices for vegetation control. Cheatgrass appears to be the primary weed concern at Chatfield. In contrast, Cherry Creek is piloting a revegetation program, with the first 5-acre section anticipated to reopen this year. The total cost for this restoration project is not yet available but fencing alone amounted to \$200,000. The long-term success of this revegetation effort remains uncertain.

Staffing

Chatfield allocates one full-time equivalent (FTE) employee who dedicates half their time to managing the DOLA. Additionally, two seasonal staff members are assigned to the DOLA for half their work hours throughout the year. Specific cost recovery details for the DOLA's operations were unavailable. However, it is likely that general park admission fees subsidize DOLA management costs, given the unlikelihood of DOLA fees covering all expenditures.

This report provides a preliminary assessment of staffing and maintenance plans at Cherry Creek and Chatfield DOLAs. Additional information from Cherry Creek State Park will be incorporated upon receipt to offer a more comprehensive picture. The City Council's insights will be valuable in determining best practices for the development and management of a DOLA at Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS).

5. Public Meeting

A member of the City Council has requested a public forum to discuss Westminster Hills Open Space (WHOS). Staff recommends postponing this meeting until the following occurs:

- **Level of Service Definition for WHOS Off-Leash Area:** The City Council establishes a clear definition for the desired level of service within the WHOS dog off-leash area. This definition will guide subsequent management plan development.
- **Area-Specific Management Plan (ASMP):** Staff require time to develop an Area-Specific Management Plan for the WHOS off-leash area, informed by the City Council's established level of service definition. The ASMP will prioritize the user experience through, but not limited to, trail alignment and amenities, such as shade structures and benches, and guide sustainable resource management.

Public education, signage, volunteer opportunities, parking management and enforcement strategies are all integral parts of the ASMP. This plan will provide a strong foundation for a productive public meeting.

6. Zoning

The WHOS is zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD).

However, it is also designated by the City as Open Space, which means it is subject to the use limitations set forth in Title 13 of the Westminster Municipal Code that prevent development. Changing that designation would require City Council action.

Additionally, the City's Comprehensive Plan identifies the use at the WHOS as Open Space/Creek Corridor, which means the property cannot be developed unless the Comprehensive Plan is amended. Amending the Comprehensive Plan would require Planning Commission and City Council action.

Finally, while zoned PUD, the WHOS cannot be developed unless an approved Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) and an Official Development Plan (ODP) are in place. There was a prior PDP on a part of the WHOS, but that PDP expired many years ago and is no longer valid. To develop that property now or in the future would require approval of a new PDP and an ODP. Approval of a new PDP and ODP would require Planning Commission and City Council action.

None of the above can be accomplished without going through a public process that includes public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council.