



**Community Engagement for the City of Westminster's Parks, Recreation & Libraries Department
Conducted by the Westminster Community Foundation
14 Focus Groups held during March 1 – April 5, 2024**

124 participants

64% - Female 36% - Male (no one identified as other than male or female)

75% - Latinx (55% - only spoke Spanish) 10% - White 8% - Asian-American 7% - Black

5% of participants were unhoused – easy participation when we were at the library.

14% - aged 0-18 year 9% - aged 19-30 years 20% - aged 31-40 years

27% - aged 31-40 years 20% - aged 56+ years

Each focus group ranged in time from 45 to 60 minutes. Each participant received refreshments and snacks as well as a \$20 gift card to either King Soopers or Target as compensation for their time. There were two moderators at each focus group to accommodate for Spanish translation. None of the Asian-American participants required translation.

The below introduction and listed questions were used during each focus group in both English and Spanish. There was time for questions and discussion on topics the participants wanted to share.

Introductory Remarks

The City of Westminster's (COW) Parks, Recreation & Libraries (PRL) Department is seeking to engage the diverse community to give their input and feedback on the 2024 PRL's current visioning plan process.

The creation of a vision plan is an ongoing process that requires complete community and workforce engagement. The PRL department is in the community involvement phase. Each stakeholder provides insights and viewpoints on the potential issues and challenges as well as new opportunities in the visioning plan process. Having all key stakeholders' (the community constituents) input considered and incorporated into the plan will solidify and produce a true comprehensive commitment to the successfulness of the process and the visioning plan.

This visioning process and ensuing plan will guide the Parks, Recreation & Libraries Department's future direction on:

- ✓ identifying the cultures within Westminster;
- ✓ determining community values;
- ✓ analyzing current strengths and areas of improvement;
- ✓ predicting the needs of the community;

- ✓ outlining programming and service development and provision,
- ✓ setting priorities and
- ✓ aiding in fiscal planning.

Furthermore, the plan will include the upkeep of facilities and provide a framework for future investments.

The objectives of the focus groups are:

1. To encourage group conversation about the future of Westminster's Parks, Recreation & Library system and how to ensure we continue the path of success.
2. To identify existing weaknesses, gaps, and challenges to this system.
3. To identify existing assets, opportunities, and priorities for this system.

The goals of this community engagement process are:

1. To have under-represented, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Color) community members understand and participate in the visioning planning process and the subsequent completed vision plan,
2. To gather the views, perceptions, and assessments by elevating community voice through grassroots meeting efforts and
3. To present a comprehensive record of the meetings and the perspectives of the community.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS – AGGREGATED ANSWERS

A. Do you and/or members of your household use the City of Westminster's parks, open space, trails, recreational programming and/or facilities and/or libraries? Why or why not?

One of the questions that we asked during this question was regarding the Activity Guide. About 65% said they received it by mail. Most folks that received read at least part if not all of it – this statement is particularly true of older adults. Many of the younger demographics thought it was dense (lots of information to read & digest) and a bit outdated. A few people suggested an app might be a great way to go. For our non-English speaking participants, it would be nice to have it in Spanish (and other languages). Others said it is not always easy to navigate finding PRL things or register for a class, program, etc. online. The people that received emails from PRL or the city will typically open and read them. People also wanted a map in the activity guide. Not surprising, only 6 people spoke of golfing and the golf courses. Several people purchased and/or received stocking stuffers and found them difficult to use quickly enough. The stocking stuffers expire before spring breaks. In the foundation funding arena, language justice is the terminology for being inclusive and respectful when providing information in multiple languages.

Please keep in mind that most of these responses are focused on the southern part of Westminster.

- **100% of participants had used city parks** – everyone likes the parks.
 - Those folks that used the Nature Playground – loved it.

- **~90% had used open spaces and trails** (as they knew) – not all participants were certain where these areas are located, until they saw the map. Most folks said they ran or biked on the trails. Interestingly, no one mentioned using dog parks.
- **~60% had utilized recreational programming.** Swimming, summer camps, silver sneakers and adult exercise activities were the most used.

Why not?

- Unaware of the programs – did not where to look
 - Language – info not in Spanish, and instructors and staff (for the most part) only speak English
 - Transportation is a barrier
 - Cost for many of the households is an issue. There is not a lot of disposable income, so they use the parks. Monthly cost compared to a Vasa Fitness is higher by at least \$10.00. People liked the free trial period option for some activities, but they did not persist due to cost
 - Activity times are not convenient for working adults and parents
 - There is not a day-to-day summer camp option
 - There are not enough teen programs and activities
- **~98% had used a recreation center.** Only a small percentage used the recreation centers on a consistent basis. During the summer months, there was more use because of the pools. Lots of people used the outdoor pool near Hodgkins because it was free or inexpensive – they did not know it was not a city pool. Among the older adults, they were grateful for and liked the silver sneakers programs. One family loved the chess programs.

Why not? (or other reasons)

- The Swim & Fit did not have a good pool for children and youth and lacked lifeguards, and it is not always open
 - City Park Rec. Pool was loved by most; however, many families could not go all the time due to cost and transportation
 - Some people wanted more information on handicapped accessibility and programming
- **99% had used the libraries.** Everyone who had used the Irving Street Library liked it. People appreciated the free computers and copy machines. Both youth, caregivers and parents appreciated that students from nearby schools were able to come after school.

Why not?

- The hours are not always convenient, especially on the weekends, and the lack of consistency for the hours
 - Almost everyone used the Irving Street Library, only, and they all said they missed the former playground [that was destroyed by arson]. We explained that the new playground was breaking ground this summer

B. What do you like about the City of Westminster's parks, open space, trails, recreational programming, recreation centers and/or libraries? What do you think the strengths of each are?

In general, participants liked all the areas and facilities because they are very well maintained. Most participants thought there was very good customer service; however, some felt "unwelcome" due to language, and a couple of older adults said the Swim & Fit Center lacked any good customer service as they were just given verbal instructions and were given hand gestures on where to go. They really wanted more help as older guests. Facilities, parks, open spaces, and trails are for the most part very, very clean. Most people did know that trails and open spaces were near (only 10 minutes) their residences. (Bullets represent the most frequent responses.)

Parks – Likes & Strengths

- Nature Playground and that it is by the commuter rail
- Splash pads are always a hit
- Proximity to home and school
- Playground equipment – when there is a playground
- The community garden at the Irving Street
- Movies in the park
- Mobile art van – art a la carte
- The trapeze
- Youth like the basketball courts.
- Doggie waste bags
- Picnic areas
- Props to Christopher Fields

Open Space and Trails

- People really liked Standley Lake and its staff
- Big Dry Creek is very well kept
- There are wide walkways and easily accessible for all abilities
- Parking is usually good
- The trails make it all the way downtown

Recreational Programming

- Variety of kid's (not teens') activities
- Summer camp locations
- Swimming lessons
- Zumba
- Pilates Reformer class is the best price in the region.
- Love the ability to drop into classes.

Recreation Centers

- Clean facilities
- Spacious workout rooms
- Pickle Ball

- Pools and water slides
- Basketball courts and the gym
- The locker rooms are nice
- The centers feel safe

Libraries

- The staff go above and beyond for their guests
- The classes at the library
- Quiet and peaceful
- Computers
- Helpful and knowledgeable staff
- Toddler Time
- Irving Street Library is convenient
- English classes
- Book selection for all ages

C. What are the barriers or challenges that limit your use and participation in the City of Westminster's parks, open spaces, trails, recreation centers and libraries?

There was one overriding them for almost all participants was the lack of feeling safe at the parks and open spaces, a lot of the time in which they use these spaces. Safety concerns include lack of good lighting, people of experiencing homelessness always present, unleashed dogs, inappropriate behaviors, people using and dealing drugs, suspicious cars in the parking lots and trash & littering. Regarding the unhoused, people did not know if there were services for people experiencing homelessness. If so, where do you find the information – this curiosity was not just from our unhoused residents. Another question was, does Westminster have shelters for the unhoused? Some people asked about Standley Lake, asking whether this space was part of the City of Westminster's domain.

Parks – Barriers and Challenges

- Unclean bathrooms
- Lack of bathrooms, and bathrooms are often locked
- Not enough shade structures, shade and trees
- More pavilions
- Too much goose poop
- Loud music and “preaching” on a microphone
- Not enough designated areas for dogs at the parks.
- Unclear where or when areas are reserved.
- Not enough walking pathways and sideways

Open Space and Trails

- Biking with kids is not always easy because you often need to cross busy streets to continue on a path or trail, especially in the southern part of town.
- People bathing in creeks.

- Dog poop along trails, and, again, unleashed dogs
- Snakes and prairie dogs
- Muddy parking lots
- More tree cover and shade

Recreational Centers & Programming

- Prices are too high for a large portion of the participants. One household said that the Vasa Fitness monthly prices are much lower than a monthly pass for a recreation center's classes, facility use and programs. Costs for a very large family is too much to pay
- Better marketing of classes and programs – other than the activity guide – in differing languages
- Translation and interpretation in other languages especially Spanish. People said they did not always feel comfortable because of the language that they spoke. "Everything is in English." This statement was a common sentiment
- It is hard to determine when there is open swimming at the Swim & Fitness Center. City Park is better for families with kids, but transportation and cost are often prohibitive, especially in the colder months
- Too many programs and classes during working hours
- Transportation
- The pricing structure for teens – once a youth is 12+ - they are charged adult rates
- Crowded basketball courts and pools
- Rude staff
- Better programs for kids and more programs for teens
- Accessibility
- Many folks thought there are bad swimming lesson programs
- Age distribution in classes was not great

Libraries

- Not long enough hours on the weekend, and they are not consistent. The hours were the biggest complaint
- There are lots of people experiencing homelessness; thus, caregivers are worried about their children and youth especially the females
- Lack of varied languages especially Spanish
- Another library in the area
- The park surrounding the Irving Street Library is not always clean
- Sometimes books are hard to find with limited selection
- Some staff are rude, but most staff are great
- Not enough materials or anything in Spanish – from all our Spanish-speaking participants
- One older adult wanted me to ensure her that her comment regarding the needle exchange for drugs addicts is a terrible idea

D. What is missing or needed in the City of Westminster's parks, open spaces, trails, recreation centers and libraries?

There were lots of ideas and recommendations. They are listed as all suggestions that should be heard and considered. Please keep in mind that almost all the participants reside in the south part of Westminster – south of 92nd. There were not a lot of ideas for trails and open spaces. Participants thought there were programs missing, when PRL does have them which may lead to the conclusion that language is indeed a barrier for communication, and/or many people do not know where to look to find information on the offering of PRL.

Many of the residents that live in the southern part of Westminster feel like city resources are not equally divided throughout the city especially South Westminster. Residents said they and their part of town have been neglected. If you want better or more activities, programs, etc., then you have to drive long distances to get to them.

Parks

- Open and clean restrooms
- Clean water fountains with WATER
- Soccer fields
- More basketball courts and fix the existing courts.
- Toddler playgrounds with fences
- Tether ball poles
- Better shade
- More seating
- More swings
- A zipline, like the one in Arvada, at Irving Street Park – the zipline was very popular with our younger participants.
- Charging stations
- Bigger playgrounds
- Exercise stations
- A running track
- More picnic areas with shade
- Dog water stations
- Bike and skateboard areas in parks for teens
- More splash pads
- More trash cans
- Volleyball courts
- The upkeep of dog waste bags in dispensers.
- Security
- Dog runs
- Better and more lighting at night for parks
- Bigger and better parking lots
- Dog runs or areas
- Extend splash pad use into the fall as temperatures are still quite warm.

- More outdoor concerts including some at the Nature Playground
- More slides from the youth participants

Open Space and Trails

- More trees
- Portable toilets outside commuter rail...? Not sure whose responsibility this ask is.
- More trash cans
- Water stations
- Bike repair stations
- Security

Recreational Programming

- Swim & Fit needs to be more kid friendly.
- MAC programming is primarily during the day, and there are not enough evening classes.
- Price-tiered class and/or gym membership based on income.
- Little kid gymnastics
- More tween and teen programming and activities that are not cost prohibitive.
- Classes in Spanish for adults and kids
- Adult swimming lessons
- Adult meet-up activities
- Sports, such as, soccer, softball and volleyball, for adults with Spanish-speaking instructors or officials, etc.
- Better advertisement
- Music classes
- Classes to learn English.
- Dance classes for teens
- Better age distribution for programs
- Educational programs for teens
- Business classes
- A better shelter program for the unhoused
- Varied programs for people with disabilities
- Maker and crafting spaces

Recreation Centers

- The Swim & Fit Center needs to be more kid friendly. Participants felt that the Swim & Fit is always closed or closed for kid swimming, and they did not like that there were no lifeguards in view or near there at all
- More restrooms
- Indoor play structures
- The rec. center by our houses is too small (referring to Swim & Fit)
- More tables in pool areas
- More opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to have workouts – to stay off the streets.

- Cleaner pool
- Adult-only times to have a workout and/or swim.
- Bilingual staff
- Better pool restrooms maintenance
- An arcade at the rec. centers
- Lower cost for large families
- Volleyball court
- Upgrade amenities.

Libraries

- More hours especially on the weekends
- More teen stuff
- Volunteer opportunities for teenagers
- More libraries in the southern part of town.
- Computers with Spanish settings
- Story times in Spanish and more kids' books in Spanish
- Puppet theater for kids
- Charging stations
- More computers and new computers
- Video game rentals
- More things to check out, such as, bake ware, tools, etc. for people that cannot afford to buy things like these type of extras
- Resources for immigrants or new Latinx residents – in Spanish.
- More magazines
- Coffee shop
- Reading Club for teens

E. What features, services and trends would you like to see in the future for parks, open spaces, recreation and libraries?

Safety and crime are at the forefront of the minds of the residents that participated for all outdoor spaces. The residents have some fear of people experiencing homelessness, especially if there is drug use involved. Since there are schools in the area where there are a lot of unhoused people sitting and talking in the park or open space.

Participants wanted more collaboration with the various cultures in the city to have events, activities & programs that help people learn, celebrate, and enjoy each other's heritages & cultures.

In every focus group, the participants strongly expressed the need for teen programming. In their opinion, it is very much needed in the south Westminster area. Transportation is a barrier to going to City Park or other rec. centers in the north part of Westminster.

Parks

- Outdoor concerts at the Nature Playground

- There were questions about how to use the baseball/softball fields at the park at 66th & Lowell.
- Big love for the 4th of July celebration.
- Skate Parks
- Concession stands
- Sandboxes and toys
- Ball rentals
- Security
- Outdoor volleyball and more outdoor basketball courts
- Soccer pitches
- Walking paths around parks especially Irving Street
- Fences around playgrounds
- Open air markets with a variety of vendors
- BBQ Grills
- Plug-In Outlets
- More Swings
- Warming and Cooling Stations for residents experiencing homelessness
- Area for bike tricks (similar to a skate park but just for bikes)

Open Space and Trails

- Bike stations to fix a problem on the trail
- Urban art sidewalks
- Security measures
- Free fishing day with fishing pole and supplies rentals

Recreational Programming

- Outdoor sport leagues that are not clubs and that are reasonably priced for all ages especially the children, youth and teens, examples, little league baseball, softball and volleyball.
- Kickball League
- Tetherball Poles
- Frisbee Golf
- Maker Spaces
- Later classes and programming
- More adult, non-competitive sports leagues
- Urban art opportunities for teens
- Bike and scooter rentals
- Dance classes and more variety of classes at varying times especially evening hours
- Computer lab and classes
- Lego Camps – this recommendation was given by many participants especially the youth.
- Skills and Engineering Camps
- Free fishing day with fishing pole and supplies rentals

Recreation Centers

- More outdoor pools
- Arcade at rec. center
- Rock climbing walls (indoor and outdoor)

Libraries

- More libraries
- English Language Acquisition classes
- Evening and after work hours classes and programs
- An app for the libraries
- Book club in Spanish
- Puppet Theatre Area with Puppets
- Puzzle Rentals

What is your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Explain if you do not agree.

A. I feel excluded from parks, programs, and facilities due to gender, beliefs, cultural, or language barriers.

YES – 52% of participants

NO – 48%

If not, why not?

The participants that felt excluded were our unhoused residents. The non-English speaking residents felt excluded because of language barriers.

B. I feel safe in the parks, open spaces and trails.

This question was answered with yes and no answers. Participants felt safer during the daytime hours; however, there was still concern over the unhoused residents that frequent the parks and criminal activities (not necessarily by the unhoused) that take place in the parking lots. There were some women who did not feel safe at the parks and open spaces, when they are alone. Unleashed dogs were also a safety concern – this response was consistent with most groups. There are no percentages assigned to the yes and no answers because it was a mixed bag of feeling safe and not feeling safe depending on the situations. There was also concern regarding the students at the schools that parents and caregivers did not always feel comfortable with their kids walking to the library. For most parents and caregivers, they did not have a choice about their students walking to the library because the kids are released from school during their work hours.

C. I feel welcome in the city's parks, programs and facilities.

Language justice was the biggest barrier for the participants that said no in relation to programs and facilities. All felt welcome in the parks and the libraires.

YES – 45%

NO – 55%

If not, why not?

Participants mostly felt welcomed at the library; however, some people felt the staff was not always friendly or welcoming. Not all participants felt welcomed at the rec. centers because of language barriers, unfriendly staff and/or that they were homeless. Some participants were fearful of asking staff questions.

D. The area near my home has convenient access to parks and recreation opportunities.

Some participants feel like “their part of town” is neglected by the city. Many participants miss Hyland Hills’ Perl Mack Center and Pool, which recently closed. Participants loved the proximity of Irving Street Park, the Nature Playground, the park on Lowell and the library as well as the MAC and Swim and Fit; however, as noted in the above data, both facilities are not always open at convenient times, have the classes they want and do not have consistent hours of operation.

YES – 95%

NO – 5%

I DON’T KNOW

E. There are plenty of park and recreation opportunities for children.

There can always be more playgrounds. A lot of participants do not know about these opportunities.

YES – 40%

NO – 29%

I DON’T KNOW - 31%

F. There are plenty of park and recreation opportunities for teens.

Participants strongly expressed their desire for many, many more teen activities.

YES – 5%

NO – 73%

I DON’T KNOW – 22%

G. There are plenty of parks and recreation opportunities for adults.

For the adult participants that knew of these adult activities, they felt the programming times were not convenient for working people. Requests for adult recreational programs at the MAC during the evening hours. There were also recommendations for amateur drama and theatre programs. Zumba is a popular adult program with a focus group participants.

YES – 34%

NO – 43%

I DON’T KNOW – 23%

H. There are plenty of park and recreation opportunities for older adults.

The older adult participants love their silver sneakers benefit.

YES – 77%

NO – 5%

I DON’T KNOW – 18%

I. I have access to lifelong learning opportunities through parks, recreation, and/or libraries.

All the participants said yes to learning opportunities at the libraries. Lots of people wanted to know if there are classes and programs.

YES – 11%

NO – 17%

I DON’T KNOW – 62%

J. Recreation and Library locations are open during convenient times.

The older adult participants felt the recreation centers were open at convenient times. Most participants believed the library hours were not convenient - especially on the weekends. Most adults believed there needed to be more evening hours for the rec. centers and the programs. There are no percentages because there were varied responses.

YES

NO

I DON’T KNOW

F. The Westminster Community Foundation is working with the Colorado Health Foundation on improving the Irving Street Park by taking into consideration what community members would like to see at this park. Do you and your household members use the park? Why or why not? What things are missing? What things would you like to have at the park?

Much of what has been documented in this report stands true for this question. Each group again talked about safety and feeling secure in the park – part of it being the unknown around the unhoused and part is the criminal activity that they see in the parking lots. Many people are saddened at seeing people experiencing homelessness. Some residents remember the shower and laundry truck and think it is a good idea to help the unhoused. On Saturdays, there is a preacher that comes and sets up shop in the park with a microphone. He preaches the good word loudly and often. Residents feel that his spoken word is not always a welcoming influence and enjoyable to hear.

- Really miss and want the playground - with more swings and slides.
- More amenities for teens.
- Additional picnic shelters with tables that are no always occupied by the unhoused.
- More and better seating with shade.
- More trees
- Cooling features in the park and around the playground
- Loves the fountain.
- Skateboard Park Area
- Outdoor grills
- More public restrooms that are open when the library is closed.
- Safety patrols
- One child wants 4 slides.
- Zipline was a popular request.
- More sustainable landscapes
- Brighter and more lights at night
- A community garden not tied to another organization.
- Climbing wall
- More accessible things for kids with disabilities
- Hands-on Stations
- Music and sensory areas
- Basketball court
- Pet restricted areas.
- Volleyball court with equipment rentals at the library.
- Large sandbox with toys
- Soft surface under the playground.
- Hopscotch and Four Square Templates with ball rentals at the library.