

## **GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY May 13, 2024**

**Meeting Convened:** 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the Fire Department Training Room, 625 Ute Avenue, and live streamed via GoToWebinar.

**City Councilmembers Present:** Councilmembers Scott Beilfuss, Cody Kennedy, Jason Nguyen, Dennis Simpson, Anna Stout, Mayor Pro Tem Randall Reitz and Mayor Abe Herman.

**Staff present:** Interim City Manager Andrea Phillips, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Ken Sherbenou Parks and Recreation Director, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Housing Manager Ashley Chambers, Finance Director Jennifer Tomaszewski, City Clerk Amy Phillips, and Deputy City Clerk Krystle Koehler.

### **1. Discussion Topics**

#### **a. Whitman Design Update**

Parks and Recreation Director Ken Sherbenou initiated the discussion, noting that the project would be further discussed in an upcoming meeting with the Parks and Recreation and Advisory Board (PRAB) at a community forum.

Greg White, the lead designer from DTJ Design, provided an in-depth overview of the design process and how community feedback has been incorporated. The focus was on the development park project, which garnered substantial public engagement since its inception last year. The project received 940 survey responses and 300 pages of comments, which the consultants effectively integrated into the design. The design team utilized various tools, including AI, to analyze and quantify the community's input.

The project team includes DTJ Design for landscape architecture, River City Consultants for civil engineering, HCL Engineers for structural engineering, Big Horn Consultants for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing design, FCI Contractors for cost estimation, and Heins Irrigation.

#### **Key Findings from Community Survey**

- **Interest and Participation:** The project received 940 survey responses and 300 pages of comments, indicating strong community interest.
- **Desired Improvements:** Key improvements desired by the community include enhanced lighting, safety measures, food and beverage options, and maintaining the park's cultural, geographical, and historical identity.
- **Top Programs:** The community expressed interest in lighting and safety enhancements, pollinator gardens, multi-use stages, and flexible seating.

#### **Specific Feedback and Priorities**

- **Safety and Lighting:** Respondents emphasized the need for better safety and lighting.

- **Preservation:** The park's historical, geographical, and cultural significance should be preserved.
- **Accessibility and Traffic:** Accessibility and traffic mitigation were highlighted as important factors.
- **Desired Programs:** The top desired programs included lighting and safety improvements, multi-use stages, and seating areas.

### Integration with Broader City Plans

- **Comprehensive Plan:** The 2020 Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan aims to enhance downtown's vitality and economic activity.
- **Parks and Recreation Master Plan:** The 2021 Parks and Rec Open Space Master Plan identified Whitman Park as a priority for improvements.
- **Ongoing Projects:** Initiatives such as movie nights in the park aim to increase community engagement and usage.

### Design Concepts

The design team presented three primary design concepts, each reflecting different themes and arrangements based on community feedback:

#### Concept 1: Honoring the Original Form

- **Design Basis:** Retains the historical layout with a central green space.
- **Key Features:** A large, flexible central green space, a multifunctional plaza, a stage with additional seating, pollinator gardens, and buffering for visual access and noise reduction.
- **Intent:** To preserve the park's classic design while incorporating modern amenities and flexibility for various uses.

#### Concept 2: Geology-Inspired Design

- **Design Basis:** Reflects the natural landscape and geological features of the Grand Valley.
- **Key Features:** Landforms representing local landmarks, flex lawns, organic pathways, recreational spaces, sculptural play areas, and food truck zones.
- **Intent:** To create a dynamic and naturalistic environment connected to the region's landscape.

#### Concept 3: Downtown Connectivity

- **Design Basis:** Strengthens the link between Whitman Park and downtown Grand Junction.
- **Key Features:** A central flex lawn, a multi-event stage, integration of downtown design elements, a small urban dog park, food cart areas, and seasonal synthetic ice rink.

- **Intent:** To visually and functionally connect the park to downtown, enhancing its role as an extension of the urban core.

#### **Detailed Discussion Points**

- **Gateway Statement and Arrival Experience:** Potential for a distinctive gateway at Pitkin Street, enhancing visibility and appeal.
- **Managing Park Elements:** Features like the climbing wall or ice rink would be managed similarly to other park facilities, with minimal staffing required for drop-in use.
- **CDOT Engagement:** CDOT is designing improvements around Whitman Park, with construction expected in 2025. They are considering maintaining three lanes on Ute and Pitkin Streets with enhanced crosswalks and possible angled parking on 4th Street.
- **Avoiding Redundancy in Park Features:** Ensuring Whitman Park has unique elements that complement but may not duplicate amenities in other parks.
- **Parking and Accessibility:** Significant surface parking is available nearby, with future improvements to enhance accessibility.
- **Post-Construction Access:** The park will be fully accessible during regular hours after construction.
- **Park Renaming:** Mixed responses to renaming indicate it requires careful consideration.

#### **Next Steps**

- **Community Engagement:** Continued sessions to gather further feedback.
- **Timeline:** The project aims to finalize the concept and schematic design by mid-July.

#### **b. Interim Housing**

### **Land Use Code - Work Group Recommendations**

#### **Development Process and Objectives**

Tamra Allen, the Community Development Director, provided an overview of the Interim Housing Initiative, emphasizing its alignment with City Council goals, the unhoused needs assessment, and inventory studies that underscore the necessity for Interim Housing solutions in Grand Junction. The Code Committee's identification of this issue as a priority led to the formation of a dedicated working group. Public engagement sessions provided critical community feedback, shaping the recommendations to reflect a broad spectrum of perspectives.

#### **Working Group's Focus and Process**

The working group conducted extensive research on best practices for Interim Housing, including site visits to the Denver metro area to gain insights into effective strategies and challenges. Public outreach sessions, both virtual and in-person, were instrumental in refining their recommendations.

## Draft Regulations Overview

### Types of Interim Housing

1. **Interim Shelter Site (ISS):** Temporary shelters for individuals.
2. **Interim Parking Site (IPS):** Safe parking areas for individuals living in their vehicles.

### Key Aspects of the Draft Regulations

- **Temporary Use Classification:** ISS and IPS are classified as temporary uses, initially approved for a two-year period.
- **Zoning:** Permitted in mixed-use, commercial, and industrial districts; not allowed in residential zones.
- **Approval Process:** Conditional use permit process via the Planning Commission, with appeals possible to the City Council.
- **Operational Terms and Expansion:** Initial approval caps at 40 units, with potential for expansion upon demonstrating successful operation.

### Next Steps

Elizabeth Garvin from Clarion Associates outlined the next steps, emphasizing continued community engagement and refinement of the draft regulations to establish a balanced and effective framework for Interim Housing.

### Detailed Presentation Highlights

**Objective:** Efficient review and approval of Interim Housing projects by the City.

- **Temporary Nature:** Emphasizing the non-permanent classification to prevent long-term establishment.
- **Zoning and Permits:** Focus on non-residential zones with a structured permit process ensuring community oversight.
- **Operational Flexibility:** Allowing for expansion based on operational success, ensuring adaptability to community needs.

### Addressing Concerns

Key issues such as parking, access, and community integration were addressed, aiming to balance facilitating Interim Housing with minimizing negative impacts.

### Expansion and Development Standards

- **Expansion Criteria:** ISS and IPS can expand beyond initial approval after demonstrating success for six months, regulated to prevent indefinite operation.
- **Development Standards:** Specific standards integrated into the zoning and development code, exempting these sites from usual density, lot coverage, and landscaping requirements due to their temporary nature.

## Site Location and Management

- **Location Criteria:** ISS and IPS must be located on lots owned or used by the sponsoring organization.
- **City Responsibility:** The City is not responsible for funding or managing these sites.
- **Shelter Layout:** Up to 40 units per ISS, each unit at least 150 square feet, with 10 feet spacing between units. Sites must be secured and screened.
- **Sanitary Plan:** Ensuring adequate connection to public water and sewer systems, though individual units are not connected.
- **Management Plan:** Addressing security, screening, resident conduct, and transportation, with compliance necessary for approval retention.

## Public Feedback and Policy Adjustments

Feedback from public sessions included concerns about funding, tax burden, impact on emergency services, site management, and the need for more outreach. There was a mix of support, opposition, and conditional support based on location and type.

## Support Levels

- **Interim Shelter Sites (ISS):**
  - Support: 41 votes
  - Conditional Support: 10 votes
  - Opposition: 11 votes
- **Interim Parking Sites (IPS):**
  - Support: 36 votes
  - Conditional Support: 11 votes
  - Opposition: 18 votes

## Shelter Types Discussed and Locations

- **Shelter Types:** Tents, Pallet Shelters, Micro Shelters.
- **Location Preferences:** Mixed support across different zoning districts, with no strong consensus.

## Policy Adjustments

- **Safety Enhancements:** Inclusion of specific coverage hours and perimeter checks.
- **Success Criteria:** Defined in draft regulations to guide future evaluations.
- **Beta Testing:** Suggested to assess feasibility and potential challenges before full implementation.

## **Project Moxie - Jen Lopez**

Jen Lopez provided valuable insights on Interim Housing, including funding sources, partnerships with healthcare institutions, and addressing specific needs such as respite care for the homeless and housing for seniors and students. She highlighted the importance of creative solutions and pilot initiatives to demonstrate effectiveness and garner support.

### **Summary**

The presentation and recommendations from the Interim Housing Work Group offer a structured and community-informed approach to Interim Housing solutions in Grand Junction, aiming to address homelessness effectively while balancing regulatory requirements and community needs. Council consensus was to reduce **Shelter Layout** to 30 units per ISS., and to not consider tents due to safety concerns.

#### **c. Park Rules**

The discussion delved into the enforcement and implications of park rules, particularly regarding the prohibition of tents and structures during the daytime. Key points included:

1. **Enforcement Procedures:** The police department outlined the process for enforcing park rules, emphasizing that park staff or officers would inform individuals of rule violations and ask them to comply. If individuals refuse to comply, they would be asked to leave, and trespassing charges may be pursued if necessary.
2. **Challenges of Enforcement:** The discussion highlighted the difficulties of enforcing rules, particularly in dealing with entrenched groups of individuals in parks. It was noted that enforcement is more manageable during the day when park staff and officers are more active and engaged with park users.
3. **Impact on Park Maintenance:** Park staff expressed challenges in maintaining parks due to the increasing number of individuals occupying them. They noted that compliance with maintenance activities, such as cleaning and landscaping, has decreased as the number of encampments has grown.
4. **Implementation Timeline:** Some Councilmembers suggested delaying the implementation of the new rules by a month to allow for a smoother transition and to mitigate potential fallout, citing lessons learned from previous park closures.

Overall, the discussion underscored the complex balance between enforcing park rules, ensuring public safety, and maintaining park usability and cleanliness. There was general consensus to add this item to Council's Wednesday agenda for further discussion and possible action.

## **2. City Council Communication**

Council noted the upcoming meeting/workshop agenda topics:

- **June 3<sup>rd</sup> - Workshop**

1. Streetlight Municipalization
  2. Council Policies (First topic: Budget Preparation and Financial Monitoring Policies)
  3. Sustainability and Adaptation Draft Plan
  4. Impact Fee Update Discussion with Consultant
- **June 4<sup>th</sup> - Joint Meeting with County Commissioners**
    1. Unhoused Strategy and Next Steps
    2. Business Incubator Center and DOE Site
    3. Beat the Beetle Campaign in Spring
    4. Discussion on 29 Road Interchange
    5. Mine Springs and West Springs Hospital News

The Council concluded its discussion by directing staff to add two additional items to Future Workshop Topics.

1. Firefighters Collective Bargaining
2. Orchard Mesa Pool and School District 51

### **3. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 9:12 p.m.