

Environmental Advisory Board
August 28, 2024
Meeting Agenda

Call to Order **6:30 p.m.**

Roll Call

Agenda Approval

Approval of Minutes from the July 31, 2024 meeting

Public Comment **6:40 p.m.**

New Business

- YAP meeting discussion items
- Mid-year check in and fall goals

Old Business

- Review regional board initiative progress to date
- EAB letter to City Council on tree equity grant program (See draft attached)

Staff Reports or Other Announcements

Adjournment **8:00 p.m.**

Next Meeting: September, 25 2024, 6:30 p.m.

The mission of the Environmental Advisory Board is to: advise City Council and Staff on environmental matters and sustainability. The EAB engages with our community and advocates for collaborative, bold, and scaleable solutions for a clean, vibrant, and resilient Westminster for current and future generations.

[EXTERNAL] Draft of EAB letter

Maria Rotunda <maria.c.rotunda@gmail.com>

Fri 8/23/2024 1:25 PM

To: Tomlin, Bridger <btomlin@westminsterco.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Bridger:

If you can include this in the packet for Wed meeting for review, that would be great.

DRAFT

August 28, 2024

Dear Westminster City Councilors:

At the July 2024 EAB meeting, City Forester Bryan McCoy presented the Westminster's Urban Tree Canopy Equity Program. As you know, Westminster was awarded \$240,000 by the US Forest Service through the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program to create this program which will benefit up to 300 income-qualified residents in neighborhoods with low tree canopy. These neighborhoods were determined by an urban tree canopy equity study conducted by CU Boulder's Masters of the Environment Graduate Program and the Center for Regenerative Solutions.

The EAB is excited to learn about this funding award and would like to express our support of this program and the application of other funding opportunities that address extreme heat and urban heat island especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods of our city.

As noted in an August 2024 article in the Journal Nature, extreme heat is an increasing public health threat for cities. Vulnerable populations of children, the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions, outdoor workers, and low income residents face a greater safety risk. *"It kills more people in the United States than any other weather event, including hurricanes, floods and extreme cold. The effects of scorching temperatures are exacerbated in cities, where buildings and roads soak up warmth."* Stagnate air during extreme heat also magnifies air pollution as ground level ozone and particulate matter are more concentrated (Nature Publishing Group, 2024). This compounds an already existing problem for our communities across Colorado's Front Range.

The urban heat island (UHI) effect is more pronounced in built environments without trees and other vegetation that aid in cooling. A recent news analysis by Climate Central, showed that Denver's infrastructure including roads, buildings, and sidewalks make it nine degrees Fahrenheit warmer downtown with an average neighborhood urban heat island effect of an increased 7.84 degrees (Frank, 2024). But, the UHI effect is not shared equally across neighborhoods. Historically lower income or disadvantaged neighborhoods bear higher temperatures. Tree planting and maintenance programs like Westy's Urban Tree Canopy Equity Program can help alleviate some of the disproportionate burden in our lower income communities.

Due to global climate change, extreme heat will become more frequent in summer and require additional effort for cities like Westminster to adopt innovative solutions to both mitigate and adapt to its effects. Some innovative ideas detailed in the Nature article include planting trees at bus stops and painting buildings (roofs) and roads white (Nature Publishing Group, 2024). Access and knowledge (emergency communication) of city resiliency centers for at risk residents to cool off on extreme heat days is important. Because extreme heat is a systemic problem that increases with global climate change, the EAB believes the city should lean into its charge to implement its Sustainability Plan as a strategic integrated effort across departments and we serve to support this work.

Sincerely,

Maria Rotunda, Chair
on Behalf of the Westminster Environmental Advisory Board

References

Frank, J. (2024, July 15). *Denver's urban heat island effect makes it even hotter than you think.*

Axios. <https://www.axios.com/local/denver/2024/07/15/denver-urban-heat-island-effect-temperature>

Nature Publishing Group. (2024). Extreme heat is a huge killer — these local approaches can keep people safe. Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-02705-x>

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