Connecting Neighborhoods & Activating our Community

Dear Neighbors,

I’m sending you this special mid-May Scoop to remind you of upcoming senior events and present the meeting notes from our community discussion on changes ahead for the Wellshire Golf Course, High Line Canal and Yale Ave. Over 350 neighbors attended the meeting on April 27, demonstrating the tremendous community support and engagement on these issues.

Don’t hesitate to contact us with your questions or for more information. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Seniors, please join us for Office Hours with Diane Young and our next Senior Series meeting: Mind and Body Fitness.

SENIOR OFFICE HOURS
Wednesday, May 11, 9:30 am-12:30 pm
District office (3540 S Poplar, Suite 100).

Are you looking for resources for you or a loved one on Medicare, housing, financial assistance, legal services, etc. and don't know who to ask? Diane Young will be available to answer questions for seniors. Appointments are encouraged but walk-ins are welcome. Contact kathy.gile@denvergov.org or 720-337-4444.

SENIOR SERIES #3: MIND & BODY FITNESS
Wednesday, May 25, 1-3 pm
Eisenhower Rec Center (4300 E Dartmouth Ave)

Join us for our next Senior Series workshop: MIND and BODY FITNESS. Stay active and
healthy! Come and learn about lifelong learning classes, volunteer opportunities and senior physical fitness programs.

- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, The Academy of Lifelong Learning, the YMCA & the Denver Public Library will discuss cultural and educational programs available in our district.
- There will be a presentation on the Silver Sneakers program including class schedules. Wear comfortable clothing as we might try some chair yoga!
- Looking to give back to the community? You will be able to learn and sign up at the Volunteer Fair. Receive more information on programs such as "reading buddies" in elementary schools, garden help at Samuels Elementary, and a sorter for Clothes to Kids (a SE Denver non-profit).

COMMUNITY MEETING
CHANGES AHEAD FOR THE HIGH LINE CANAL, WELLSHIRE GOLF COURSE, YALE AVENUE

WEDNESDAY APRIL 27, 2016 | WELLSHIRE EVENT CENTER | ATTENDANCE: 350

Inspired by many inquiries from constituents, this meeting was to inform and involve community members on planned changes to the High Line Canal, Wellshire Golf Course, and Yale Avenue. The meeting connected constituents with representatives from organizations and departments involved in the plans. In attendance were key people from Denver Water, Denver Parks & Recreation, Denver Public Works, & the High Line Canal Conservancy. The High Line Canal and Wellshire Golf Course are cherished community assets and Yale is an important thoroughfare in southeast Denver.

(Special shout-out to the Wellshire Inn for accommodating over 350 community members in attendance)

71 miles long, the High Line Canal was constructed in 1883 to bring water from the South Platte River to the plains. Today, Denver Water owns the Canal. It is still used to deliver water, but it is inefficient and wasteful with as much as 70% of water lost to seepage and evaporation. Denver Water is working to move its customers off of the Canal. Recognizing that the Canal is a cherished regional recreation asset, Denver Water—along with the 11 jurisdictions that it flows through—formed the High Line Canal Working Group to look at ways to preserve and improve the Canal. Each of the speakers addressed various aspects of the Canal, including the Wellshire Golf Course. Because the Canal crosses Yale Avenue two times—and the many traffic challenges along Yale—a Denver traffic engineer also discussed planned improvements along Yale.

Below is a summary of each speaker's remarks as well as questions and answers.
Kendra Black – Denver City Councilwoman, District 4

Councilwoman Black welcomed the group and noted the importance of the Wellshire Golf Course and High Line Canal as treasured parts of southeast Denver. She explained that the meeting was a result of constituent requests and questions. She thanked community members for their passion and involvement and for turning out in such large numbers. She emphasized the importance of continued community involvement on these projects and her role as a liaison for bringing community and government efforts together. Councilwoman Black then introduced the panel of speakers who are actively involved in shaping the future of the High Line Canal, Wellshire Golf Course, and Yale Avenue.

Scott Gilmore – Deputy Director, Denver Parks & Recreation

Denver Water and Parks & Recreation jointly maintain the Canal as it flows through the City & County of Denver. Denver Water manages the water delivery aspects of the Canal, while Parks & Recreation manages the recreation aspects, including the trail. They share the maintenance of the trees. Parks & Recreation actively participates on the High Line Canal Working Group and is collaborating with the High Line Canal Conservancy, particularly as it pertains to trails and vegetation. The Canal supplies water to the Skeel Reservoir, which is used to irrigate Wellshire Golf Course. Denver Water and Parks & Recreation are working together to install a new irrigation system at Wellshire and move it off of the Canal as a water source and onto potable water. Scott also raised attention about the Emerald Ash Borer, which is an impending crisis for trees on the Golf course and throughout Denver.

Harriet LaMair – Executive Director, High Line Canal Conservancy

Phone: 720-767-2452
Email: hello@highlinecanalconservancy.com
Website: http://highlinecanal.org

The High Line Canal Conservancy arose out of the High Line Canal Working group, which identified the need for an organization to work across jurisdictions to improve and preserve the Canal. The Conservancy is focused on finding a long-term solution that will preserve the Canal as a 71 mile greenway. A conservancy is a non-profit that can advocate more strongly for parks and green space than the government can do alone. The Conservancy is partnering with community members and stakeholders to create a plan to “preserve, protect, and enhance” the Canal. The Conservancy is eager to engage with the community in the future, and is planning public events. Visit the website, email the Conservancy, or sign up for their newsletter: http://highlinecanal.org/contact, or hello@highlinecanalconservancy.org.

Melissa Elliott – Assistant Director of Public Affairs, Denver Water

Denver Water is a key player in the changes ahead for both the High Line Canal and the Wellshire Golf Course. The Canal is not an efficient water conveyance and the drought/flood cycle in Colorado makes it particularly difficult for the Canal to serve its original purpose. Water from the South Platte is diverted at Waterton Canyon to the Canal, but the diversion dam was destroyed during last year’s floods. Because of this year’s run off, the diversion dam will probably not be repaired, in which case water will probably not be diverted to the Canal this summer.

Denver Water is not in the business of recreational water supply and eventually plans to stop supplying the Canal with water. There are less than 100 actual customers, including Wellshire Golf Course and Fairmount Cemetery. 70% of water leaks out of the Canal before reaching its destination. Denver Water is partnering with the 11 jurisdictions that the Canal flows through, the High Line Canal Working Group and the High Line Canal Conservancy to explore options that will preserve the Canal and trail. Denver Water is also working with Parks & Recreation to connect Wellshire Golf Course irrigation to potable water.

Sarah Anderson – Water Project Manager, Public Works
In order to continue supplying the High Line Canal with water, Public Works is implementing a pilot program to supply the Canal with storm water run-off. This water source is being explored as a means of keeping Canal vegetation and trees alive and preserving the Canal as a recreational public asset. This feasibility study is sponsored by Urban Drainage and will access 1000 acres of water-drainage between Colorado Blvd and I-25 to divert storm water to the Canal. As part of this initial effort construction will occur in the Canal from November to April of 2016. The efficacy of this method in providing water to vegetation along the Canal will be studied. If this pilot is successful, storm water could be used in the future to supply water to the Canal, which would result in more water in the Canal for as many as 100 more days a year.

**Jay Henke – Trails Planner, Parks and Recreation**

Trails are important in making sure the High Line Canal is an accessible and connected green space for communities along its entire span. Parks & Recreation is a member of the High Line Canal Working Group. Jay’s focus is to improve the trail. A feasibility study in 2014 found that there is a high-perception of danger and impediment to trail access where the Canal trail crosses Hampden and Colorado. A federal grant will fund two underpasses (tunnels) to allow trail users to safely get from the Denver portion of the Canal to the Cherry Hills section. One tunnel will go under Colorado Boulevard from Magna Carta Park to Wellshire. The other will take trail-users from Wellshire, under Hampden, to the trail on the south side of Hampden.


**WELLSHIRE GOLF COURSE**

**Scott Rethlake – Golf Director, Parks & Recreation**

Parks & Recreation is working with Denver Water to migrate Wellshire Golf Course off of High Line water and connect it to potable water. Part of this process involves replacing their irrigation system over the next year. This will not require the course to be closed but there may be some inconveniences during the transition.

The Skeel Reservoir will no longer be filled by the Canal, but will still be used for storm water retention. The driving range will stay in the same location. The small pond at the 10th hole will be dried out and made more playable in line with the original course design.

**YALE AVENUE**

**Justin Schmitz – Traffic Engineer, Public Works**

There are traffic issues all along Yale. Because part of Yale goes through Arapahoe County, Denver Public Works is working with Arapahoe County to design and fund improvements from I-25 to Monaco. Their plans include improvements for traffic and pedestrians at intersection of Holly and Yale. Improved traffic signals will help move traffic 30-40% more efficiently through the bottleneck at Holly/Yale. Additionally, more turn lanes are planned and the plan calls for cleaning up the intersection using new traffic movements and new pavement. Pedestrian and cyclist accessibility will be helped by better crossings and sidewalk improvements.

The initial design should be completed this year. Funding will then be procured and the project will be a Capital Improvement Project priority. Construction may be in 2018.

**QUESTIONS**

Below are summaries of questions and answers from the meeting.

**Question:** The bridge at Yale and Holly (over the Canal) needs to be replaced – can you give an update? Very dangerous intersection. Many accidents.

**Answer (Justin, Public Works):** The city has a scale on how to rate bridges. This one is not actually in bad structural condition even though it looks bad. It is not part of the Yale improvement project. There are no plans to replace it at this time. Councilwoman Black would like to see the bridge reconstructed and a pedestrian/cyclist underpass constructed under Yale.
Question: Are there lanes being added to Yale?
Answer (Justin, Public Works): There will be lanes added but not through the entire project. There are plans to add turn lanes going through Holly where the project will change to two lanes. There are constraints in this corridor where one lane on Yale backs up traffic. Additional improvements will be made going west-bound to extend the capacity of the lanes.

Question: Traffic on Yale has increased dramatically over the past year – any solutions?
Answer (Councilwoman Black): More than 16,000 people moved to Denver in 2015, 100,000 if you include the entire metro area so traffic has increased as a result of this. Southeast Denver has only three east-west thoroughfares (Yale, Evans, and Hampden.)
Answer (Justin, Public Works): Public Works is working hard to accommodate these changes. They hope to improve the ability to get through the Yale corridor but will not create 4 lanes because the land is not available, and it would likely increase traffic pressure in the area. They will be extending the westbound two lanes to improve the flow of traffic.

Question: Are there plans to widen Yale Ave?
Answer (Justin, Public Works): Yes there are plans as part of the 2018 plan. Widening the project will not take anyone’s house and they hope to minimize impact.

Question: Why can’t the Canal trail go through the golf course?
Answer (Scott Gilmore, Parks & Recreation): Cost and safety reasons. This would cross 5 holes and require modifications to Donald Ross’s historic course design. Federal grant funds will be paying most of the cost of the tunnels. These funds would not be available to modify the golf course. The tunnel should be complete in 2019.
Answer (Councilwoman Black): It is not safe for non-golfers to walk on golf courses. Being hit by a golf ball can actually kill a person. Our city attorneys have advised against this for safety and liability reasons.

Question: Are there plans for improving High Line Trail connectivity for people west of Colorado Blvd?
Answer (Jay Henke, Parks & Recreation) This will be studied in the future but is not part of current plans due to limited opportunity to procure funding.

Question: Who is responsible for maintenance of Canal? In recent years, trash, fallen trees, etc. have accumulated in the Canal especially at Eisenhower Park.
Answer (Scott Gilmore, Parks & Recreation): Shared responsibility: Denver Water is responsible for the Canal and water. Parks & Recreation maintains the trail. To report problems, call or email 311 so that the city can have a permanent record. And, take a picture and email it along with a description and location to Scott, or submit the photos via pocketgov.org. Parks & Recreation has over 6,000 acres to maintain. Get involved in your neighborhood organization and plan a clean-up day. Parks and Recreation can help you adopt part of the Canal.
Answer (Councilwoman Black): You can call or email 311 and call our office. The city tracks complaints and their resolutions via the 311 system so it is important to submit complaints and concerns. These records inform future maintenance and project planning. People are encouraged to make reports pocketgov.org which automatically go to the 311 system. For example, you can take a picture of a pothole with your phone and report it through pocketgov.org which will provide the location via GPS.

Question: Many apartment buildings are going up near I25/Yale all the way to Colorado Blvd. Traffic is bad and it’s difficult to walk along Yale. How are people going to get around?
Answer (Councilwoman Black): Improving walkability is a priority for Councilwoman Black. She serves on the Sidewalk Working Group and several other committees that are working on improving mobility. Southeast Denver was developed around the car. We are now having to go back and retrofit our streets to be pedestrian friendly. Councilwoman Black took Mayor Hancock on a tour of the district, and he agreed that we have mobility and connectivity challenges. There
is a lot of development at the Yale station and across Denver. Thousands of people are moving to Denver. Urbanization is happening around the world. A current priority for city planning is to put density around light rail stations so people will take the train instead of driving. Councilwoman Black is concerned about pedestrians crossing Yale to get to the station. Traffic engineers are looking into a crosswalk at Forest and Yale. The sidewalks on Yale are narrow and inadequate. Because sidewalks are the responsibility of homeowners, we currently have no way to improve them. Councilwoman Black hopes to get money in the budget to prioritize sidewalk improvements around light rail stations, schools and shopping areas.

**Question:** Will supplying the Canal with storm water create stagnant pools? What can be done for mosquito control?
**Sarah Anderson (Public Works):** The systems design allows water to drain in 12 hours. Some areas may get clogged but the goal is to improve filtration and trash collection.
**Scott Gilmore (Parks & Recreation):** Parks & Recreation works with Environmental Health on mosquitoes to treat pools and kill breeds. Email Scott with pictures and information about stagnant water and he will forward complaints to Department of Environmental Health. 311 can also help on this issue.

**Question:** Trees along the Canal are falling due to wind. Are they going to be cut down? What is the plan to address age of trees and risk to trees going forward?
**Answer (Jay Henke, Parks & Recreation):** There will be an assessment of trees in June. Many of the cottonwoods are old and at the end of their life span. This is a time of transition as trees reach their life spans and give way to new species. This is why they’re looking at new ways to replace the water source and create a master plan for the corridor. Trees will be removed when there is a health or safety hazard. This is part of the reality of the Canal's age.

**Answer (Harriet LaMair, High Line Canal Conservancy):** If the storm water plan works the Canal will have water 100 more days of the year which will benefit the trees.

**Question:** Will the quality of the storm water be damaging to vegetation? Are we using Denver’s drinking water? Is that the best use of storm water?
**Answer (Sarah Anderson, Public Works):** Storm water is nutritious with good bacteria that benefits vegetation. The best way to clean storm water is to pass it into the Canal. They will look at replacing plants with more native species to increase the density and diversity of vegetation.
**Answer (Scott Gilmore, Parks & Recreation):** They will transfer Wellshire Golf Course to potable water. This area doesn’t have recycled water so potable water is the best option. Using potable water is much more efficient than using the Canal.

**Question:** I would be willing to pay for 2 trash cans along the High Line Canal. How do I do this?
**Answer:** Contact Scott Gilmore, deputy director of Parks and Recreation or our office at tate.carpenter@denvergov.org.

**Question:** Are there any plans to make more use of the Wellshire Building/Event Center, possibly as a restaurant again?
**Answer (Scott Rethlake, Parks & Recreation):** There is currently a concessionaire contract where food and beverage is separate from the golf course. They are an event center and do not plan to function as a restaurant. The golfer’s pub is still open to the public.
**Answer (Councilwoman Black):** The current agreement has been in place since the 1970s but there is overwhelming community support for a restaurant.

*Still have questions? Please email Kathy.gile@denvergov.org or call 720-337-4444*