



Park Vista Drainage and Annexation Project Frequently Asked Questions

October 6, 2023

- **Q: How and when was the decision made to close the roads?**
 - A: The idea of closing the intersection permanently has been discussed internally at the City since 2017. This discussion was based on a Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) request related to the resources required and high-risk rescues performed yearly during storm events. Because the intersection was in a split jurisdiction with the County, it was difficult to move forward with the idea due to a lack of funding and agreement with the County. Therefore, the temporary gates were installed to close the intersection during storm events. Now, with new ARPA funding and agreements with the County in place, the City is ready to move ahead with the decision to close the intersection, eliminating the safety risk the current intersection poses for the traveling public and CSFD.
- **Q: Who is funding this project?**
 - A: The City is utilizing \$5.5 million of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from El Paso County to the City of Colorado Springs. Additional funding comes from the City of Colorado Springs Stormwater Enterprise (SWENT).
- **Q: Was the public consulted and asked to provide input about the road closure decision?**
 - A: No, this decision was made based on the high level of risk to the traveling public and the extremely risky rescue operations by CSFD performed regularly during large storm events. Closing the intersection was further supported based on a traffic study showing high volumes of cut-through traffic through the adjacent neighborhood via this intersection.
- **Q: How often has the gate been closed since it was installed in 2019?**
 - A: CSFD has the authority to close this intersection at their discretion based on predicted storm size and duration. They do not keep track of times and durations of past closures. The City and County also have rights to close and open the gates at their own discretion if the CSFD does not; however, neither entity has performed this function since the gates were installed.
- **Q: When does construction start and how long will it last?**
 - Construction is expected to start at the beginning of 2025 and be completed in late 2026.
- **Q: Why is the City now annexing in properties that have been in El Paso County jurisdiction?**
 - The Park Vista neighborhood has long been a County enclave surrounded by the City. This strains County resources due to its isolated location. The City plans to annex all roadways and City-owned pieces of land/lots.
 - The City desires to improve the Templeton Gap drainage channel and SWENT funds can only be applied within the city limits. The County provided funding to assist the City with cost of the channel improvements.
- **Q: I don't want to be in the City- do I have to annex into the City?**
 - If you are currently in the County, you are not required to annex into the City as part of this project. The City will make a one-time offer to annex properties currently in the County into the City in conjunction with this project. No property owners are required to participate in annexation as part of this project.

- **Q: Why are you closing the intersection?**
 - A: The public intersection creates life safety incidents (per CSFD) when heavy rains cause the intersection to flood. This requires the fire department to conduct swift-water rescues for trapped motorists.
- **Q: How long will the intersection be closed?**
 - A: The intersection will be closed permanently. The project includes removal of the physical roadway to provide room for the drainage channel.
- **Q: What are the proposed alternative routes, and how will I get there?**
 - A: The primary alternative routes for the neighborhoods are Half Turn Rd, with access from Academy Blvd, and the northern segment of Siferd Blvd, with access from Austin Bluffs Pkwy.
- **Q: Will this increase neighborhood traffic in other areas?**
 - A: Due to the removal of cut through traffic from Austin Bluffs Pkwy west of Siferd Blvd to North Carefree Circle east of Hollow Rd, traffic along Hollow Rd is expected to decrease significantly.
- **Q: What will block the intersection of Date St and Siferd Blvd?**
 - A: The project removes the roadway at the intersection and constructs three cul-de-sacs at each dead end on either side of Siferd Blvd and Date St. The channel will be open and bisect these cul-de-sacs.
- **Q: I use this route to get home- can local traffic still be let through?**
 - A: No traffic access will exist through the former intersection. Alternate routes through the neighborhood are available.
- **Q: Are people going to start using Hopeful Dr or Half Turn Rd as a new cut through?**
 - A: It is expected that a significant portion of current cut through traffic in the neighborhood will stay on Austin Bluffs Pkwy or Academy Blvd, instead of cutting through the neighborhood.
- **Q: Will closing the intersection delay emergency responders from getting to my house?**
 - A: Existing alternative routes will provide access to the neighborhoods for emergency responders. Emergency responders have expressed support for the project.
- **Q: Why don't you build a bridge?**
 - A: The channel needs significant improvements and would be wider than the existing channel to provide additional capacity for flood water. Constructing a bridge would introduce a new water restriction and/or significantly impact surrounding properties.
- **Q: Are you allowed to close my road?**
 - A: The City is allowed to adjust current traffic patterns to protect public health and safety.
- **Q: Will the City be taking my property for this project?**
 - A: There are several properties along the existing Templeton Gap drainage channel that the City needs to purchase, either in part or whole, for the drainage channel improvements. Impacted property owners will receive notifications and federal guidelines will be followed to make offers to purchase affected the property.

Park Vista Drainage and Annexation Project Frequently Asked Questions - Public Meeting

(Q&A paraphrased from October 19, 2023 Public Information Meeting)

- **Q: Improvements to Date Street from Beverly Street to Siferd Boulevard are scheduled for 2026-27, and the work includes Siferd Boulevard to Hopeful Drive. However, it's unclear why these improvements are being made after the project starts. Can't we begin work on them now that the property has been annexed?**

A: The annexation process is currently underway for some of these properties. The City plans to waive some fees for property owners who install new utilities. This utility work requires cuts into the roadway surface. The City wants any roadwork to occur after these cuts have been placed. This avoids the need to make roadway repairs twice, ultimately saving money. The 2026-27 timeline allows the cuts to occur prior to future roadway improvements.

- **Q: Will drainage at Half Turn Road and Academy Boulevard be improved as part of the potential installation of a light at the intersection?**

A: The flooding at Half Turn Road and N. Academy Boulevard are largely attributed to local drainage issues. The current project focuses on reducing flooding through the drainage channel within the project area to the north; however, we are actively seeking solutions for this area.

- **Q: The City previously indicated a bridge that was planned to be constructed along the channel in 2018 for \$8.7 million, why is that no longer feasible?**

A: A bridge alternative was examined and found there were significant difficulties that were not evaluated during the conceptual design. There are major utilities that would require relocation before a bridge construction could occur, adding significant cost to a bridge. With limited funding resources for the improvements, a bridge option quickly became cost prohibited and alternative options were evaluated to allow the City to be the most fiscally responsible with the available funding.

- **Q: During previous projects, the City faced difficulties doing improvements along Academy Boulevard due to the State owning Academy Boulevard at the time. Will you encounter similar challenges with your proposed traffic light at that intersection?**

A: Ownership of Academy Boulevard in this area has been transferred to the City, thereby eliminating the involvement of the State. The City supports the installation of a traffic signal at this location but only if it makes the intersection safer for the new traffic conditions.

- **Q: Will there be more traffic on Half Turn Road when this project is completed? Is there anything to help ease traffic from speeding on Half Turn Road?**

A: Several traffic calming elements and traffic management strategies will be evaluated to help prevent individuals from wanting to cut through the neighborhood on Half Turn Road. This includes making it more beneficial for drivers to stay on Austin Bluffs Parkway or Academy Boulevard and use Barnes Road or North Carefree Circle.

- **Q: Is there going to be a turn lane on northbound Academy Boulevard going into Half Turn Road?**

A: A right turn lane and traffic signal at Half Turn Road will be evaluated during the design phase of the project.

- **Q: I understand that this will have a positive impact on the north side of Hollow Road; However, I would like to know how this plan helps the people on the south side.**

A: The removal of the cut through traffic along Siferd Boulevard and Hollow Road will reduce the traffic along Hollow Road. Southeast of Half Turn Road, Hollow Road currently has 385 cars going towards N. Carefree Circle during peak hours. After the intersection is removed, Hollow Road will have 165 cars during peak hours moving towards N. Carefree Circle. Therefore, it is anticipated that the project will reduce traffic on Hollow Road by approximately 60% in this one direction.

- **Q: How are emergency services going to be impacted getting to that part of Hollow Road when the access is gone?**

A: The Fire Department evaluates response time impacts within the office of the Fire Marshal before making changes to existing traffic patterns. Its evaluation determined that any impact for a potential delay is extremely minimal.

- **Q: Is there any potential for the use of reverse or normal speed bumps?**

A: Speed bumps serve as one strategy for speed reduction and can be evaluated as part of the traffic calming study.

- **Q: Can a study be completed on the increased traffic of Half Turn Road when there's an accident on Academy Boulevard?**

A: Traffic accidents vary in their impact to through traffic on Academy Boulevard. The completion of a study to evaluate accident impacts would have limited ability to inform traffic routing.

- **Q: Is there going to be any kind of pedestrian access, specifically for high school students who are still going to try to walk through the area of the old intersection at Siferd Boulevard and Date Street to get to school? Could a pedestrian bridge be built across the creek?**

A: The project is currently evaluating various pedestrian pathways that students could use to get to Doherty High School. This may include the possibility of a trail connection along a small segment of the drainage channel. During examination of a potential roadway bridge, we also considered a pedestrian bridge. However, similar challenges that exist to construct a roadway bridge also exist for a pedestrian bridge.

- **Q: Why can't you stop the flooding further upstream rather than trying to fix it close to the Park Vista residents?**

A: Unfortunately, the upstream watershed is significantly developed, limiting available space to construct additional stormwater management facilities. Impounding stormwater is tightly regulated due to water rights concerns of downstream users. This often prevents large projects from holding back water for long periods of time.

- **Q: Will the City construct a continuous sidewalk on Date Street considering the absence of sidewalks in certain areas?**

A: New curb and gutter with sidewalks will be built for the cul-de-sacs as part of the project, but not along the entire length of the streets. The City, through the Missing Sidewalk Program, can assess the area for potential future sidewalk installation.

- **Q: What information is going to be used to decide what traffic control measures may be constructed at Half Turn Road and Academy Boulevard?**

A: The City maintains a large database from a variety of sources to evaluate the traffic conditions at the intersection. This safety data from reported crashes, speed, and traffic counters are used with engineering models to determine how changes to the traffic patterns at an intersection might impact future traffic. Several alternatives are compared with each other to determine what traffic control measure—such as a stop light—would be most effective. The City does support a traffic signal at this location but only if it does not create a more unsafe condition.