

The results are in!

Find out what COMO residents believe should change to secure a better future for everyone.

Change.org and Mayor Buffaloe teamed up to start a conversation that crossed boundaries:

“What would **positive change look like in COMO?”**

Get hundreds of people to share their ideas, and vote on the ideas of others.

Identify their **common interests**, despite differences on other issues.

Bring 100 people together for a conversation about those resonant issues.

Stop hiring out of state companies to solve local issues, such as violence prevention consultants with zero proof of success. Invest that money in programs for kids & cops in teams on foot in high risk areas building positive relationships.

Clean streets monthly at minimum to prevent trash entering waterways.

Separate homelessness from addiction and public disorder when developing city policy. Different problems require different solutions, and treating them all the same isn't working.

In Phase 1, we received **41,579 votes** on

452 IDEAS

from **1,858 residents.**

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Would it be possible to have a parking meter that allowed the use of an app as well as coins?

Add street reflectors to the major roads, it's impossible to see the lanes when it rains.

Make Columbia more attractive to high paying employers, not the service sector. Retail & restaurants are great to have, but they do not provide decent wages. Incentivize employers who will provide high wages.

Our analysis identified three main groups of residents based on how they voted



Green & Equity Advocates

Supports **ambitious climate action**, including renewable energy mandates and energy-efficient building codes, alongside **robust social programs** addressing housing affordability and homelessness. They imagine an inclusive, sustainable Columbia where **public resources reduce inequality**.

Safety & Infrastructure Pragmatists

Prioritizes **public safety investment**, particularly increased police staffing and accountability measures while expressing **skepticism toward new taxes and expanded social spending**. They are cautious about climate mandates, homeless program expansions, and surveillance technology.

Fiscal Minimalists

Defined by **strong opposition to new taxes and government spending**, consistently rejecting proposals for transit expansion, affordable housing programs, parks funding, and climate initiatives. Their focus is on **basic utility reliability and fiscal restraint** rather than expanded public services.

GREEN & EQUITY ADVOCATES

This group strongly supports ambitious climate action, including renewable energy mandates and energy-efficient building codes, alongside robust social programs addressing housing affordability and homelessness. They favor public investment in transit, community gardens, and infrastructure that benefits lower-income residents. Their vision centers on an inclusive, sustainable Columbia where public resources actively reduce inequality.

MAKE OR BREAK

Have the city subsidize solar panels for low income residents.

This group: 91%

vs Others: 22%

69% Gap

Renewable energy transition and emissions reduction goals

Affordable housing, rent control, and homeownership support

Expanded homelessness services and rapid rehousing

Active transportation, sidewalks, and public transit

Community infrastructure: parks, gardens, and safe streets

SUPPORTS

More affordable housing options for first time homebuyers and also for renters. Not many non college renting options. Apartments don't include utilities and cost more then 1000 a month for a 2 bedroom 100%

Family shelters and more support to help the ones who are living in hotels. Also help the ones who are housed but at low income. They are like me in a program with very low income. 100%

Pay non-degreed city workers MORE, working class wages are embarrassing. City has trouble filling/retaining positions due to the work being physically demanding/dangerous & low paid. City has serious 100%

OPPOSES

Many bus stops are taken over by homeless drug users 77%

We need more police patrolling the business loop and handling the homeless issue 69%

I would like to see less tax increases with a large amount of the \$ going to uncommitted items! We need police to enforce laws, keep us safe! We do not need to vote for thousands of \$ going into uns 58%

SAFETY & INFRASTRUCTURE PRAGMATISTS

This group prioritizes public safety investment, particularly increased police staffing and accountability measures like body cameras, while expressing skepticism toward new taxes and expanded social spending. They support core infrastructure fixes — potholes, water and sewage — but prefer that funding come from reallocating existing budgets rather than new levies. They are cautious about climate mandates, homeless program expansions, and surveillance technology.

MAKE OR BREAK

Hire more police officers per the recent study that said we were severely understaffed. The lack of awareness is astounding.

This group: 82%

vs Others: 50%

32% Gap

- Increased police staffing and public safety funding
- Accountability and transparency in city government
- Opposition to new taxes and calls for budget reallocation
- Core infrastructure repair as the top priority
- Skepticism toward homelessness program expansion and climate mandates

SUPPORTS

- | | |
|---|------|
| Protect the land around Columbia to prevent large data centers from moving in. | 100% |
| Fix potholes around the city | 100% |
| Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city! | 97% |

OPPOSES

- | | |
|---|-----|
| Shut down Broadway to traffic and parking from 9 pm to 7 am on Fridays and Saturdays to allow for food trucks to set up along Broadway and safe pedestrian movement downtown. | 64% |
| Construct an outdoor swimming pool in the empty field adjacent to the ARC. | 56% |
| More resources and shelters for the homeless | 54% |

FISCAL MINIMALISTS

This group is defined by strong opposition to new taxes and government spending, consistently rejecting proposals for transit expansion, affordable housing programs, parks funding, and climate initiatives. They are particularly concerned about an overburdened tax base and want sunset clauses on existing taxes. Their focus is on basic utility reliability and fiscal restraint rather than expanded public services.

MAKE OR BREAK

Expand Rapid Rehousing initiatives to provide medium-term (4-24 months) tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services to unhoused families.

This group: 11%

vs Others: 95%

84% Gap

- Strong opposition to new and ongoing taxes
- Sunset clauses and voter reauthorization for all tax levies
- Utility grid reliability and basic infrastructure over expansion
- Rejection of climate, housing, and transit spending programs
- Fiscal restraint as the overriding city priority

SUPPORTS

- | | |
|---|-----|
| No new taxes! Taxpayers are overburdened and overtaxed in Columbia. | 95% |
| Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city! | 90% |

OPPOSES

- | | |
|---|------|
| Mandate a transition to 100% renewable electricity for Columbia Water & Light by 2035 to meet the targets of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). | 100% |
| Increase funding and dedicated staffing for the DIVERT program to assist individuals experiencing homelessness. | 97% |
| Direct the Climate & Environment Commission to create an incentive program for residential energy-efficient retrofits to help achieve an 80% reduction in community emissions by 2050 | 94% |

Unifying Ideas

These are the ideas all COMO residents agreed on, ordered by how important voters indicated they were.*

Protect the land around Columbia to prevent large data centers from moving in.

(10.41 Importance Score)**

#1

*Ideas listed meet a minimum threshold of agreement among the entire COMO community.

**Importance Scores are a standardized measure of the strength of voters' agreement with a goal.

2. Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city! **(9.50)**
3. Use City buses for shuttling people to and from Farot Field on game days. Have 2 central pick up/ drop off spots. Charge a couple bucks. See what might happen! **(9.34)**
4. The homelessness crisis is out of control. Residents and business owners deserve safe streets too. We need real solutions that reduce homelessness, improve public safety, and hold city leadership accountable for results. **(8.57)**
5. Re-paint road and lane lines with reflective paint to improve visibility and driving safety during the nighttime and in rainy conditions. **(8.09)**
6. Have the City Manager's annual performance review tied to the agreed upon goal and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) decided in the next five-year Strategic Plan. **(7.86)**
7. Separate homelessness from addiction and public disorder when developing city policy. Different problems require different solutions, and treating them all the same isn't working. **(6.99)**
8. We need to stop filling downtown with more smoke shops and bodegas and start attracting family-friendly locally owned restaurants, shops, and businesses that make people want to spend time downtown again. **(4.06)**
9. Allow apps and cash to pay for parking. That gives people more options and doesn't prevent someone with no cash from paying the parking meters. **(2.93)**

This enables us to identify the issues that all groups care most about

01

10.41

Importance Score*

Responsible Limits on Data Center Development

"Protect the land around Columbia to prevent large data centers from moving in."

✓ 75% bridge

"Absolutely no data centers in Columbia. They do not provide jobs and drain natural resources."

✓ 67% bridge

"The electrical grid is negatively impacted by AI data centers."

✓ 58% bridge

02

9.50

Importance Score

Well-Maintained Roads, Reliable Water, and a Resilient Grid

"Re-paint road and lane lines with reflective paint to improve visibility and driving safety during the nighttime and in rainy conditions."

✓ 96% bridge

"Fix potholes around the city"

✓ 93% bridge

"Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city!"

✓ 90% bridge

03

9.34

Importance Score

Better Transit Connections and Easier Parking

"Would it be possible to have a parking meter that allowed the use of an app as well as coins?"

✓ 75% bridge

"Allow apps and cash to pay for parking. That gives people more options and doesn't prevent someone with no cash from paying the parking meters."

✓ 73% bridge

"Use City buses for shuttling people to and from Farot Field on game days. Have 2 central pick up/ drop off spots. Charge a couple bucks. See what might happen!"

✓ 67% bridge

*Importance Scores are a standardized measure of the strength of voters' agreement or disagreement with a goal.

✓ % shows cross-group bridging score

This enables us to identify the issues that all groups care most about

04

8.57

Importance Score*

Real Solutions to Reduce Homelessness

"The homelessness crisis is out of control. Residents and business owners deserve safe streets too. We need real solutions that reduce homelessness, improve public safety, and hold city leadership accountable for results"

✓ 75% bridge

"Separate homelessness from addiction and public disorder when developing city policy. Different problems require different solutions, and treating them all the same isn't working."

✓ 75% bridge

"Enlist the homeless to help build tiny homes. Clean up Columbia works well. Do it like a habitat for humanity type project."

✓ 54% bridge

05

7.86

Importance Score

Disciplined, Transparent, and Accountable City Management

"Have the City Manager's annual performance review tied to the agreed upon goal and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) decided in the next five-year Strategic Plan."

✓ 86% bridge

"Every added tax above the 4.75% basic state tax should have a time ended date then the publican revote to keep it or discontinue it."

✓ 72% bridge

"Create a new charter taking the power out of the hands of unelected city staffers. The City Manager holds all the power, seems accountable to no one. Mayor and Council need power to hire/fire/manage City Manager."

✓ 72% bridge

06

6.99

Importance Score

Community-Based Public Safety and Public Order

"Stop hiring out of state companies to solve local issues, such as violence prevention consultants with zero proof of success. Invest that money in programs for kids & cops in teams on foot in high risk areas building positive relationships."

✓ 78% bridge

"Make people get a citation and pay a fine or more if they're driving while they are high. It's a constant problem in this city."

✓ 70% bridge

"Remove and ban Flock surveillance cameras and contracts."

✓ 69% bridge

*Importance Scores are a standardized measure of the strength of voters' agreement or disagreement with a goal.

✓ % shows cross-group bridging score

Of everything we heard,

Responsible Data Center Development

emerged as the topic to talk about next.

- **RELEVANT**

All three groups consistently engaged with this topic and was an issue that resonated strongly across all three opinion groups – making it a clear point of shared interest.

- **ACTIONABLE**

Regulation of data centers, including their construction and zoning, use of utilities like water and electricity, and their relationship with the community are core activities the city can take action on.

- **COMPLEX**

Real trade-offs exist between development and regulation. Residents broadly agree that strong regulations are needed - but it is unclear what those regulations should be and how they interact with the potential economic benefits data centers might bring to the city.

NEXT UP:

COMO Civic Dialogue

We'll gather a sample of residents from all over the city to talk about the chosen topic,

Responsible Data Center Development in COMO.

If you are interested in participating in the live dialogue, sign up at [**ideasforchange.org/como**](https://ideasforchange.org/como).