

Potential Mass Shooting in Denver Stopped by Police, not Gun Control

By [Cam Edwards](#) | December 02, 2023 [Story source: Bearing Arms](#)

Authorities in Denver still aren't sure what Joshua Mitchell's plan was, or if he even had one, when he abandoned his car on a busy street and walked a mile to a city park while armed with a rifle, but after Mitchell was shot and killed by officers police discovered hundreds of rounds of ammunition in multiple magazines on his person and in a knapsack.

Mitchell didn't fire any rounds before police arrived on the scene at Commons Park on November 20th, but there were multiple 911 calls made from parkgoers alerting authorities to a man who was [chasing people](#) and yelling at them while carrying a long gun. When the first officers showed up at the park, Mitchell was seated on a park bench, but refused to drop his gun when officers told him to do so. Instead, he allegedly raised the rifle at one of the officers and squeezed off several rounds, prompting them to [fire back](#) in response.

Body-worn camera footage shows both officers told Mitchell to drop his weapon twice before Mitchell began shooting. He started shooting approximately 15 seconds after the officer on the hill exited his vehicle.

The two officers fired seven rounds during the shooting, Clark said. Police approached him after it appeared he had dropped the rifle to see if they could provide medical aid. Mitchell was pronounced dead by paramedics at the scene.

Police Chief Ron Thomas said officers may have prevented a greater tragedy from occurring that day.

"I want to acknowledge that any time a life is lost it's certainly a tragedy and I don't want us to lose sight of that today," Thomas said. "I do think there's evidence to suggest that had the officers not taken the actions that they took that there could have been an even greater tragedy given some of the things that we've discovered in our investigation."

The *Greeley Tribune* noted in its coverage of the incident that at least **one of the magazines possessed by Mitchell is illegal under Colorado law, which limited magazines to no more than 15 rounds of ammunition starting back in 2013. The paper failed to mention that Denver has its own local ban on so-called assault weapons as well.**

That's not the only gun control restriction that failed to prevent this crime. **In Denver all parks are "sensitive places" where lawful concealed carry is banned thanks to a vote by the city council last May.** The council voted 9-3 in favor of including parks in its gun ban on city property, despite criticism of the proposal from a few members like councilman Kevin Flynn.

Flynn emphasized on Monday that carrying a gun in a city park is already illegal unless a person is a license concealed carry permit holder. He did not see how banning law-abiding permit holders from having guns in parks changed anything for the better. He pointed to recent incidents of violence in public parks, including [a fatal shooting in La Alma-Lincoln Park](#), and noted there was no connection to concealed carry permit holders.

"There is no data, no foundation that this actually does anything at all to improve our safety," Flynn said.

Enforcement concerns were part of what motivated District 9 Councilwoman Candi CdeBaca for forwarding an amendment that would have left parks out of the news restrictions. Specifically, CdeBaca said the suspicion that someone could be carrying a firearm in a park could be used as a justification for police to come to a scene with guns drawn. She said the legislation was likely to lead to racial profiling and put people of color at greater risk of unnecessary and even dangerous interactions with law enforcement.

"I'm really disappointed in my colleagues today," CdeBaca said after her amendment was voted down 9-3. She said that as a person of color she and her family have been directly affected by excessive uses of force by police. "We just opened the door to justify it."

I don't know if CdeBaca's concerns have been justified to date, but **Flynn's admonition that the carry ban in parks wasn't going to improve public safety was spot on. If Mitchell had chosen to open fire in that gun-free zone, there would have been no armed citizen there to fire back in defense, and God knows how many people could have been injured or killed before police arrived on scene.**

The local gun control laws in Denver and the state-level restrictions imposed by the Democrat-controlled legislature did absolutely nothing to stop this attack from taking place, and in fact endangered the people who were in the park when Mitchell flagrantly violated the edict not to bring guns inside its perimeter. I'm incredibly thankful that the officers arrived as quickly as they did, but this incident should be all the proof the city council needs to rescind its policy and allow lawfully armed citizens to protect themselves and their families in these supposedly sensitive places.