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Question/Comment

WELLNESS CENTER

While I understand there are concerns about the floodplain and the Civic Center location, and people are looking at Northside growth, my concern is that the Wellness Center be located in a walkable location for both seniors who don't drive (many in facilities near downtown) and as a safe place for youth with working parents to go after school.

Northside locations' accessibility (as a Northside resident for 20 years) heavily favors drivers and those with time to wait for railroad crossing, and is not always safe for pedestrians and bikers, especially up at the soccer fields where there is a patchwork of sidewalks and narrow streets.

The most affecting testimony on the Wellness Center I have heard is from a young person whose parent worked and couldn't pick them up from school until after 5 pm, whose family didn't have the economic resources for other after school activities or transportation options. Parents with the means and free time can drive their kids to whatever Wellness Center location is chosen, but those with fewer financial resources should be equally served by being able to walk to the location (in bad weather too) from school. The Wellness Center could also serve as a healthy, active social hub for elders whose vitality is enhanced by both physical activity and social interaction if the location is easily accessible to them, and doubly so if they can arrive there independently. The Wellness Center could be a safe, enriching haven for those greatest in need of its offerings if a walkable location is chosen, or a Country Club atmosphere if only accessible to those with people to drive them there and those living in the neighboring blocks.

This is an opportunity to build a Wellness Center that could be a tool in reducing youth suicide and senior isolation, or another resource inaccessible to those who would most benefit - continuing to widen our community's growing gap between privilege and poverty, building on the inequality that undermines mental and physical health and access to assets and enriching opportunities.

Thanks for considering those in greatest need in our community, and thank you for your robust community engagement process.