

From: [Livingston Montana](#)
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Question/Comment

Dear City Commission,

Let's build a Livingston Wellness Center that reflects and respects our Community Growth Policy! I am excited by the prospect of an indoor recreation facility, but let's make certain that its location mirrors what citizens have said they want to see in new development, as articulated in the Livingston Growth Policy. That document emphasized that as we grow, we want to: protect the natural environment, conserve our historic assets, promote sustainable development practices, and meet the needs of all residents, especially the underserved neighborhoods.

I strongly believe that the north side locations – Washington School, M Street Park, or near the Northside Park/Dickerson Soccer Fields - are the most appropriate sites, and far preferable to the Civic Center site. My reasons include: 1). Concerns over siting a multi-million-dollar facility dangerously close to the flood prone Yellowstone River, 2). Replacing the historic Civic Center with a large, modern structure that detracts rather than compliments the current natural riverfront parks, 3). Continuing to concentrate community services and assets on the south side of town, rather than the more rapidly growing north side.

The advantages of the north side options include:

1). Making certain that this significant community investment is in a location out of harm's way from natural disasters like periodic floods.

One of the recommendations of the Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force which spent four years studying the Yellowstone River after the back to back floods in the 1990s, was that no new public buildings should be built in the area of the Civic Center. And, that was before the effects of climate change and its associated unpredictable weather patterns and river run off rates were well understood. As exemplified by the catastrophic Yellowstone floods last year, all bets are off on climatic factors that could result in more flooding. Considering the significant cost of this facility, and that it may at some point have to play a role in emergency services, keeping it out of harms way not only seems prudent, it is essential. Finally, while the Yellowstone riverfront has been altered by development, strolling the levee still offers residents a natural setting for a peaceful encounter with wild nature. The proposed size and design of the Wellness Center and associated parking facilities would be visually jarring and completely out of context to with semi-natural river corridor aesthetic.

2). Making recreational facilities more convenient for the underserved and rapidly growing north side neighborhoods such as those near the water treatment plant and Livingston transfer station.

The north side of Livingston is the fastest growing part of the community. Large new subdivisions are only now being built out. When completed, they will significantly increase our population living on the north side of the tracks. While the north side does boast the soccer

field complex and some baseball fields, it still lacks the recreational amenities of the south side such as Sacajawea Park, the Spray Park, and the cultural amenities of downtown, etc. What it does host are our waste management and sewage treatment facilities. Isn't it time that they directly benefit from additional recreation facility development? And while some would cite the issue of the need for an additional railroad crossing, that would still be the case if the Center were built on the southside of town. We need to think more wholistically about our community and broaden our primarily south side orientation.

3). If the Washington School site is chosen, repurposing this now closed facility and making it a model of sustainable development.

If the now closed Washington School site is selected, it could become a model of reuse of an existing building and property, that could be a model for other towns just as the Shane Center and Lincoln Schools have been. And it would reflect what people seemed to want to see in our development patterns, i.e. infill development in existing neighborhoods.

In conclusion, concern about building this facility next to the wild and flood prone Yellowstone River, and believing that its time that the north side of town be the location of something nice, not just where we take our human wastes, the sights on the north side of town are clearly the best option for the development of this facility.

A new Wellness Center will be a tremendous community asset. Let us make certain that its location enhances, rather than negatively impacts, our significant natural and historic resources, and truly meets the needs of all our community members.

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The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.livingstonmontana.org/node/7/submission/1571>