

**From:** [Livingston Montana](#)  
**To:** [webmaster](#)  
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Submitted by anonymous user: 172.221.105.186

Submitted values are:

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Email

Question/Comment

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment. I'm writing as a mother of three whose children frequently use both the Civic Center and Community Pool in Livingston. We have also used similar facilities like the Wellness Center proposed in other communities. This is a bit of a ramble so bear with me.

The amenities in the Wellness Center that are important to me do not need to exist in the same building, but include:

Indoor aquatic center that facilitates swim lessons, water activities for people of all ages and a swim team for middle and high schools.

Indoor field house with turf surface for field sports like soccer, football, lacrosse and baseball. This is a selfish plug... but we have several basketball courts already in town but nowhere for my soccer-crazed kiddo to train in the winter.

Indoor walking track.

Indoor courts for basketball, pickleball and roller skating.

A climbing gym.

As important as what is inside, it's also important what is outside this Wellness Center, and how it connects to the broader community. Having facilities outdoors adjacent to the Center, like a park and green space for gathering, picnicking and playground will be essential. A Wellness Center should be connected to the broader community by bicycle and walking trails that are safe and ideally separate from roadways. A Wellness Center should be near commerce and local businesses too.

Regarding the location, an important factor to me is accessibility. From what I observe one of the best things about being a (slightly older) kid in Livingston is the freedom they have to get around town on their own. It's a really special attribute of Livingston that no longer exists in most communities.

Summertime in Livingston for my kids means having free roam of the south side of town, they range between the skate park, the city pool, the Civic Center, the Farmer's Market, the Library, the Yellowstone river to Coffee Crossing and back home again. One of my kids is a lifeguard at the pool and my youngest spends most days at the stake park. We walk our dogs on the levee. If you made a heatmap of where my family spends most of our time the Civic Center region would be red hot. So selfishly having the Wellness Center in this location would be tremendously beneficial and frequently used by our family.

But this type of safe space with recreation and commerce doesn't exist on the north side of town. And due to the lack of safe crossings of the railroad tracks, kids living on the north side do not have even remotely equal access to these amenities and the same degree of childhood freedom.

I am excited at the prospect of what placing a Wellness Center at Katie Bonnell Park or Washington School could do to incentivize a similar third space as well as walking and biking connectivity on the northside. If the Katie Bonnell Park location is chosen, it would ideally retain its current function as a neighborhood park in addition to the Center. The Washington School site is a lot closer to downtown, schools and I like the possibilities for commerce. You could have it all in one center or put the pool at one location and the fieldhouse and walking track at the other. I don't mention the North Side Soccer location because its proximity and elevation make it an unreasonable location to walk or bike to from most of town.

Either location would require a lot of investment. Safer pedestrian railroad crossings at 5th, 2nd and Bennett Street, or potentially a crossing somewhere west of 5th Street. It could require completing sidewalks and a bicycle pathway along Gallatin and likely underneath the 89 bridge on the east side of town. Hopefully it would incentivize the growth of a small business district on the north side of the railroad like that outlined in the growth policy.

All of this would take time and money, but the good news is, a lot of this type of reinvestment and infill infrastructure is mapped out in recent plans and policies like Livingston's growth policy update and especially the Trails and Active Transportation Plan.

On the other hand, the risk with all of the north side locations is that without holistic investment in both the Center and how they connect to the broader community, most of the northside locations would only be realistically accessible by car and therefore not get the same amount of use by local youth as the Civic Center location. During the school year local youth would likely have to be bussed to safely get there. As a personal example, my daughter who is too young to drive would not have decided to work as a lifeguard if she could not safely ride her bicycle to the pool on her own.

So I guess I am saying if we could incorporate safer crossings, sidewalks, a bike path and an adjacent park and commerce center as part of the overall concept, a Wellness Center at either Katie Bonnell Park or Washington School would be ideal locations and provide the most long term benefits to our community. It could address some of the long term issues about the lack of safe railroad crossings.

That, and you don't have to build in the floodplain.

Thanks for taking the time to consider my comment,  
Erica Lighthiser  
Phone Number

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.livingstonmontana.org/node/7/submission/1647>