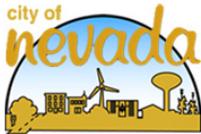


# Story County **Wellness** and **Recreation Center Planning**

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# Emerging Themes



**O**n August 16, 2016, the consulting team facilitated seven discussions with seven groups representing:

- City of Nevada
- Story County Medical Center
- Youth Organizations
- Community Service Organizations
- Wellness Partners and Providers
- Eastern Story County Communities

This white paper highlights the findings from those discussions related to needs, wants, opportunities and challenges ahead in developing a proposed wellness and recreation facility.

### *Walking track, gym and flex space dominate as preferred physical facilities.*

Most of the groups mention early and often their interest in an indoor walking track and/or gym. Others bring up multi-purpose rooms and flex space. These are considered the “must-haves” for this facility by most. Story County Medical Center staff members identify the need for rehab facilities and a therapeutic pool. For most members of these groups, an indoor pool (particularly leisure family swim) is at the top of the “nice-to-have” list but not a necessity.

*Indoor walking and jogging track.*

*We have to fight with the school to get the gym. Maybe you could reserve the gym for basketball practice.*

*I like the idea, I just wish I had a better idea of why we need it.*

*Pool, indoor pool, showers . . . people wouldn't have to go to hotels in Ames if they want to swim.*

*Take a nice hotel pool where you can just go and swim and exercise and your family can be there together with enough room that people can lap swim if they want.*

*Story City has a very nice facility—a track above the basketball court so you can run and walk and do activities on the bottom; some machinery there as well and a manned desk so you are greeted when you come in.*

*You need flexible space where different things can take place.*

*I kind of like the library rooms, where you can go in there and study or have a meeting.*

*What could Nevada do that is unique? Maybe something that you could only find in a much larger community and the gym space is the ONE thing I have really heard about.*

*We need an indoor track. Five of us moms run in the streets . . .*

### *They see this facility as a bad-weather alternative.*

Overall, respondents see this facility as a means to stay active in winter months—or during the intense heat waves experienced this summer. Toward that end, turf gets a nod with some respondents recognizing how distinctive and valuable such an offering could be—at the same time, acknowledging the size of the facility with indoor turf might prove costly.

*For seniors—to go walking in the winter especially.*

*Jogging and biking when the weather's not conducive to swimming.*

*Most things hurt attendance-wise in the summer, but when it's 95 degrees, people could walk inside.*

*Something like this is a big attractor for people who are raising kids to have something to do in the winter time.*

*This gives the ability for spring-summer-fall sports to train year-round.*

*I want an indoor shooting range.*

*I know there's a need for batting cages and youth sports—have you guys been to the Pella Recreation Center? It's indoor turf, it's absolutely huge and then it's used by the city and they have batting cages that come down . . .*

### *Respondents ask for the wellness center to promote wellness.*

Toward that end, they at first are not interested in food (except, perhaps, for vending machines), but when they start to consider nutrition education and associated health

benefits, a café and/or culinary/instructional kitchen increases in interest to them. Overall, they seek programming that speaks to wellness beyond more traditional recreation programming.

*I know that some people, their definition of wellness is more than recreation . . .*

*Food is a “don’t need”.*

*A lot of the stuff [listed on the handout] is recreation, but wellness is not just recreation. It’s mental, spiritual and physical. We don’t really have anything on here for that.*

*For example, we could have a nutrition demonstration kitchen.*

*Second Monday of every month, we could have a cooking wellness class.*

*There’s a yoga group who meets in towns . . .*

*Need a social area . . .*

*Physical, financial and spiritual wellness—I hear there’s a need for financial classes for parents. I hear there’s a need for child care. A huge need, especially in more eastern sections of the county for before- and after-school child care. . . Food service programs . . .*

### *They encourage a staffed, secured facility.*

They want both the social benefits of greeting and the security of staff presence.

*Security [is a concern]. We need an entrance pass of some kind to get in . . .*

*I’m hoping it’s something that’s staffed.*

*I don’t know what the thinking is here, but when we go to the Y in Spirit Lake, there are nice people on staff and people at the desk. You get in with no problem with security. They know you are there. It’s just nice not to walk into an empty building.*

*It would be nice to have a closed circuit system that’s monitored.*

### *Most respondents see this as serving youth, seniors and young families—with a call for day care and managed schedules.*

Some want a true “pre-natal to grave” facility. Generally, youth and seniors are seen as the top priorities in terms of community need but they imagine the facility won’t sustain itself unless it can also appeal to young families. They see some day care—or child programming while parents exercise—as a potential “must have.” It’s also clear that many in these groups envision themselves using the facility, too (whether they fit into one of those categories or not). Many speak of operational schedules that will allow for different groups to use the facility at different times.

*Ease of use is important. You need to be able to use it when you want it.*

*A 24-hour facility.*

*The focus was originally more basketball courts, just enough practice courts, but if that’s the only purpose, I can’t see building this.*

*We checked the child care box [it is already offered in town].*

*That means a lot to parents.*

*We need a piece over here for old and young.*

*I can see a need for everybody.*

*This could [deliver] true cradle-to-grave wellness—from a social aspect, all incorporated into one place and then you have some nice synergies going in. The problem is going to be dollars.*

### *They ask for sustainable, affordable operations.*

Most respondents do not have a clear picture of what that entails, but if this facility is built, they want nearly anyone with an interest to have ready access to it through its affordability. At the same time, they note the city/county have put in place a number of amenities. They question Nevada residents’ ability to afford all the amenities, even as they might see them as generally beneficial to the long-term vitality of the community.

*If it is a public entity, run by a non-profit, the pricing needs to reflect that.*

*What kind of employees do we have working for us? Are the people around here able to afford this? Our production and manufacturing workers—what they make—they might not be able to afford the extra costs.*

*It needs to be affordable. Otherwise we spend money and it's just going to sit there.*

*The schedule needs to be available for people.*

### *Location preferences are split.*

Many in the community would likely come down in favor of the SCORE park location due to its current bike/ped access and that it fits into an overall complex people see as fun and accessible. At the same time, people recognize Medical Center staff likely need nearly immediate access to the facility to make it work for patients and these groups reveal potential insurance restrictions on the location. An additional upside to the Medical Center location is its perception that it's a facility less about Nevada and more about Eastern Story County (see below) and it potentially can enhance the “wellness” image. But people question whether a facility at the hospital will resonate as a place for all. Some say it simply doesn't sound fun there and will be discouraging to attendance. At the least, they say, it could be a slower start to success.

*The [hospital location] implies maybe older people are going there to work out. SCORE Park might see more teens or young adults because they're not going to go to a clinical setting.*

*We could draw people to the hospital, get more focus on prevention wellness—that's how hospitals are leaning.*

*Story City—their wellness center is partnered with the clinic there.*

*From a community standpoint, I see SCORE more appealing. It could happen at the hospital, yes, but it might take more time.*

*Need a location that's easy for kids to get to, but kids should not cross new Highway 30.*

*Kids can't head south of Highway 30.*

*We will need an improved walkway over the bridge.*

*There is a big group of people who live on that south side of 30 who could access it more easily [if it were located at the Medical Center].*

*If it's at the Medical Center, it says to me it's not just for Nevada but for the east side of the county.*

*Advantages [to medical center location] are lots of space, maybe accessibility for patients. Moving 21st century rehab out there and using it for therapy—that would be a plus.*

### *The name will matter a great deal—especially if attempting to appeal beyond Nevada's city limits.*

As mentioned above, this is potentially one of the advantages to the Medical Center location—the facility suddenly is perceived as less about the City of Nevada and more about the broader geographic reach and the theme of wellness in addition to recreation. Similarly (with the opposite result), if the name invokes the Story County Medical Center title, community members see that as challenging their sense of welcome to the facility.

*Ideally, a significant donor will step up and they will get the naming rights.*

### *Eastern Story County's rural seniors and youth are seen as potential beneficiaries of this facility, if they can get to it.*

Transportation will be key to access for many in Eastern Story County, but particularly the audiences this facility might be best poised to serve: youth and seniors.

*There's a lot that's missing for elder individuals in the county, especially in rural areas. Youth who are in rural areas are missing out on a lot.*

*Transportation is so prohibitive ...*

*In a magical world where I get everything I want, transportation would be amazing, especially for those elderly individual who can't get out of their home on their own.*

### *Overall, the role for this facility in Eastern Story County is complicated.*

If it's perceived as "Nevada-only" (through name and/or location), that proves a challenge. And while some level of need is acknowledged, Eastern Story County respondents also see additional facilities coming on line. At the same time, as one county supervisor implied, if this facility is built to serve the Eastern part of the county, it will likely receive significantly more support. He envisions the Nevada facility as the central, prime fitness location and other smaller "hubs" scattered throughout communities.

*Right now there is a really nice job by Collins to take an old building downtown [and turn it into a fitness center]*

*Maybe have a larger community center [here] with scaled down fitness centers [in other communities] where you get basic services, but when it's time for something more, you head here. If we are looking to spread out funding for this, that's how we sell it to our smaller communities.*

*I think this is something that's needed in the rural part of the county . . .*

*There can be push back from smaller communities in rural story county, what's in it for us if it's in Nevada, why don't we just build what we need.*

### *The Medical Center-City partnership is perceived as a mixed bag.*

On the one hand, many say this facility could never happen without this partnership. At the same time, they acknowledge challenges—schedule/access, facilities, operating agreements, naming, location, perception—due to that partnership. Overall, however, the sense is "pursue the partnership." It makes more sense than not and both players are given some credit for their willingness to take on a creative partnership to enhance the community.

*Every time you have a partnership, you have a problem.*

*Just make sure the community isn't locked out of it when the hospital needs it or parks and rec runs their programs in it. That's what we run into with the school facilities. We can't get in. Want to make sure this is truly a community center.*

*Who would be running this show?*

*Who runs it in other towns?*

*I don't know if parks and rec would dominate it.*

*We need professionals in charge of the facility to ensure safety.*

*The medical center can focus on running the facility where parks and rec has a far [greater] breadth of service.*

*Credit to them for trying this.*

*Must get two models to mesh—the therapy model and the community wellness-recreation model.*

### *The question of competition is a big question.*

Many of the respondents in several of the groups express a desire to not duplicate current offerings or compete with the private sector through this facility. It's not just those who fear their businesses will face competition who express concern. This discussion point comes up often and unprompted. Many also see great potential for developing a facility that has little to no competitive elements but they express distrust that even a facility promised as non-competitive would stay that way. The features seen as most competitive are the cardio/fitness equipment pieces—or dance programs that go too far (offering a recital and costumes, for example). The fitness business owners can envision a pricing structure of benefit to them (reduced membership/entrance fees to the community facility for their full-time members, for example) and that may end up as part of the answer to address this ongoing question of competition and duplication.

*I see this as competition.*

*If there were programs, they would need to be non-competing programs.*

*I agree with youth sports. It wouldn't be much of a competition but outside that [I would see it as competition].*

*If you want to run a dance camp that is six weeks long, I don't feel threatened by that—most parents want the costumes and recitals and the whole nine yards.*

*We already have two dance studios and three fitness facilities.*

*If it's youth-focused, it would probably help us [fitness centers] out in the long run.*

*When the public comes to the city and says we want some cardio and we'd like to lift weights, too, Park and Rec is not going to say "we don't do that."*

*When this task force was first started, it was presented as a gym space and therapeutic pool, and if that's what this is, then it's a good thing.*

*We have three different facilities currently. How will this affect them?*

*Let's not duplicate what we have elsewhere.*

*Businesses could potentially run the weights area in the fitness center.*

*It's hard to compete with government.*

*Ultimately, most respondents would agree the benefits outweigh the challenges.*

They see it as a "growth factor" for Nevada, a wellness promoter, and a quality of life enhancement for those already enjoying life here.

*Struggling to bring more housing and family housing, this obviously would be an attraction for that. Another asset we could provide to new families in the community.*

*It offers a lot to attract and retain employees.*

*It makes our community much more marketable; just having it there attracts people even if they're not going to use it . . .*

*Lots of need for our tax dollars and gyms and things like that should be a lower priority at this time, but if we can afford it, it would be nice.*

*Look at what we've done: SCORE Park, the industrial zone, the hospital itself—there was a community drive to build that. One project after another that has improved the community, so it would seem that a rec center was next in line for priorities for what it could offer the community, especially in the area of physical activity.*

*As an employer, I'd love it if we had a beautiful facility if it could be paid for in the proper way and we need to do things along with housing to attract people.*