

BILLINGS HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

PREPARED FOR

CITY OF BILLINGS

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PREPARED BY

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Introduction

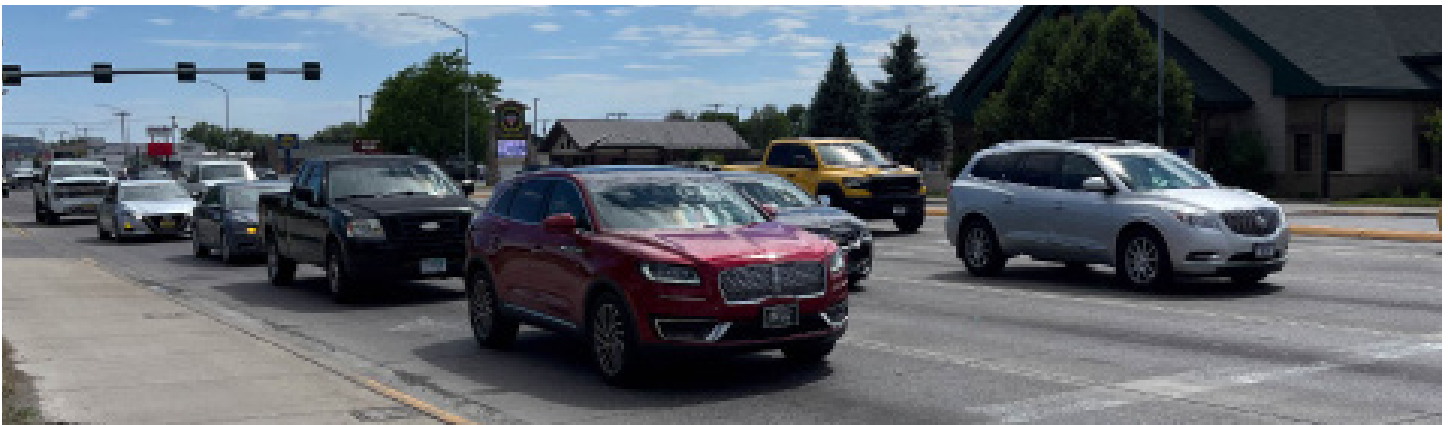
In accordance with the City of Billings Land Use Planning Public Participation Plan, the purpose of this Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to help the project team identify and outline opportunities for continuous public participation in the development of the updated Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan.

The PPP will also help the project team provide relevant, accurate, and consistent project information to stakeholders and the general public.

Project Summary

Working from the existing Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan that was developed in 2005, this project will include a comprehensive analysis and recommendations for city and county agencies to use when developing future plans for the Billings Heights (“Heights”).

The updated plan will focus on themes identified through public participation activities such as surveys, feedback forms, open houses, and stakeholder meetings. We anticipate those themes to align with categories such as public safety, education, economic development, and more. The plan will also include a transportation analysis and tangible implementation strategies.



Public Participation Objectives

The city’s public participation (PP) objective is to “consistently keep the public well informed and actively involved at every stage of the local planning process, starting from the formulation of planning policies, progressing through the conceptual phases of planning projects, and concluding with the formal adoption of planning documents.” Our team understands that proactively engaging the community and key stakeholders throughout the project is essential in building trust with the community, creating opportunities for public participation, and ultimately developing a high-quality planning document that represents the needs and values of the community.

For this project, our PP goals are to:

- Provide useful and timely information to the public throughout the development of the project.
- Provide opportunities for verbal and written comments from the public.
- Facilitate open discussion of controversial issues and/or communication themes.
- Respond to comments and suggestions.

- Confirm public comments are fully considered so that useful ideas are incorporated into the project as appropriate given availability of resources and policy constraints.

Strategies to inform the public on the project will include:

- Engaging the steering committee to provide oversight and input to inform plan development.
- Developing a website and corresponding materials to share general project information and to connect the public with opportunities to provide input (e.g. comment form, online survey, interactive map, etc).
- Meeting with stakeholder groups to determine shared goals, gather input, and facilitate open conversations about the project.
- Planning, promoting, and hosting two open houses to discuss project with members of the public.
- Distributing press releases about the project and coordinating with area media to raise awareness about the project and promote public participation.
- Sending periodic email updates to the project distribution list.

Communication Objectives

Effective and open communication will play a vital role in the project’s success as it relates to public and stakeholder receptiveness and participation.

The key communication objectives for this project are:

- To identify and share key communication themes with stakeholders and the general public.
- To share project information in a clear, concise manner to increase understanding, public interest, and input.
- To promote public meetings and other public participation opportunities.
- To consistently communicate the purpose and status of the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan.
- To engage the community and stakeholders throughout the project.
- To provide information on policy- and regulatory-driven processes.



Project Area Demographics

Located on the northeast end of Billings, Montana, the Heights neighborhood is nestled between Billings' notable rimrocks (also referred to as the "rims") and the Yellowstone River. With about 33,500 residents, the Heights houses about one third of the city's total population. Longtime residents of the Heights are known for having a prideful sense of community. Since its annexation to the city of Billings in the 1980's, the Heights has experienced consistent growth due to various factors including affordable housing, easy access to outdoor recreation, good schools, and other quality of life amenities.

Despite consistent growth, connectivity challenges between the Heights and Billings proper have contributed to the perception that the Heights is a less desirable place to live and/or start a business. Most of the commercial district of the Heights is centered around Main Street, the primary access point for many surrounding neighborhoods and Highway 312. As a result, Main Street has become a heavily used commercial corridor. The ongoing construction of additional roadways through the Inner Belt Loop and Billings Bypass projects are intended to increase connectivity, improve traffic operations, and make the Heights more accessible overall.

Understanding these demographics and how they relate to the continued growth and improvement of the Heights will be instrumental in tailoring our communications approach.



Target Audiences

Our team will tailor our outreach and engagement approach with the following Target Audiences in mind.

Audience	Communication Purpose
1 Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination/collaboration to discuss ideas and share opportunities to provide input. • Inform about project status. • Establish open lines of communication and facilitate a dialogue to inform document development.
2 Stakeholder Groups* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heights Task Force • Heights Business Association • Yellowstone River Parks Association • Big Sky Economic Development • Law enforcement/EMS • School district representatives • Local clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve them in the project; learn about needs. • Facilitate in-person meetings to collect input. • Inform about project status.
3 Business and Property Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project and share opportunities to provide input. • Inform about project status. • Facilitate open dialogue about comments/concerns. • Garner support.
4 General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide general project information and inform about project status. • Share opportunities for public participation. • Garner support.
5 Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide general project information. • Share opportunities for public participation. • Individual coordination to encourage media coverage and consistent project messaging.

**Additional stakeholder groups (up to 10) will be identified in collaboration with the Steering Committee as the project evolves. This is a preliminary list.*

Communication Tactics

Our team will engage stakeholders and members of the public early in the data collection phase to solicit input and discuss the purpose of the project. We will develop targeted communications specific to the audiences identified in the table on page 4. The overall communications and engagement strategy will focus on delivering timely, accurate, and clear information to encourage public participation and support for the project using the tactics outlined in the table below.

Project Phase

Outreach/Communication Tactic	Project Initiation	Data Collection/Analysis	Document Development	Draft Document	Finalize/Revise Document
Public Participation Plan Development	X				
Logo and Brand Development	X				
Develop Stakeholder/Media Contact Lists	X				
Website, Interactive Map, and Online Survey	X				
Open Houses and Informational Video (including promotion, presentation materials, and media outreach)		X		X	
Graphics and Project Area Photography	X	X	X		
Stakeholder Meetings and Coordination	X	X	X		
Steering Committee Development, Coordination, and Meeting Facilitation	X	X	X	X	X

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan	DATE:	09/25/2024
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	5 – 7 p.m.
ORGANIZER:	DOWL / City of Billings / MPO	SUBJECT:	Open House

PROJECT TEAM ATTENDEES:

Nicole Cromwell
Wyeth Friday
Read Stapleton
Kate Silber
Doug Enderson
Megan McLean
Lisa Olmsted

ORGANIZATION:

City of Billings / MPO
City of Billings
DOWL
DOWL
DOWL
DOWL
DOWL

DOWL and the MPO hosted an open house on behalf of the City of Billings, Yellowstone County, and the Billings-Yellowstone County MPO to engage the Heights community in the planning process, collect feedback, and to share general information about the Heights Neighborhood Plan.

Project messaging included:

- General project information (i.e. goals, focus areas, etc.).
- Anticipated timeline for plan development.
- Maps illustrating the project boundary, how development has changed in the Heights over time, current community/public facilities, planned and existing transportation routes/projects, and an overview of Heights zoning classifications.

Open house materials included:

- Large aerial maps of the project boundary with opportunities for attendees to draw or add comments on them.
- Display boards with project information and how to contact the project team.
- Idea boards to encourage comments and ideas from attendees.
- Flyers with a QR code for the website.
- Comment cards.
- Sign-in sheet.
- Printed copies of the engagement survey.
- Laptop to help attendees complete the online survey or view additional resources related to the Plan.

Attendance:

With approximately 100 attendees throughout the evening, this event had a great turnout. Most attendees were engaged and committed to understanding the challenges and opportunities of continued growth in the Heights. Several questions and concerns related to a recent rezone request. Although that issue is outside the scope of this project, it led to productive

MEETING SUMMARY

conversations between attendees and the project team and provided community members with accurate information straight from the source (i.e. Nicole and Wyeth).

Attendees primarily included:

- Heights residents and business owners
- Steering committee members
- Community leaders (Mayor Cole, City Council members, etc.)



Key take-aways and lessons learned:

- **Meeting format:** The open house format worked well for this event. The open layout of the room helped create a casual and inviting atmosphere. A couple of attendees expressed confusion about why there would be no formal presentation, but their concerns related primarily to a requested zoning change outside of this project.
- **Date/Time:** Most attendees arrived between 5 and 6 p.m. and left by 7 p.m. Attendees seemed to appreciate that they could come and go as they liked, rather than sitting down for a formal presentation.
- **Comments:** About 75 written comments were made throughout the night using the designated “Idea Boards,” display boards, and roll plots. In addition to written comments,

many attendees engaged in productive conversations with the project team sharing their concerns, questions, and ideas including:

- Questions about “man camp” style housing. Some were concerned about it negatively impacting their neighborhoods. Nicole explained the intention behind this style of housing.
 - Discussion and questions about the requested rezone in the Heights.
 - Positive comments about the opportunities that the updated Neighborhood Plan could bring to the Heights.
 - Thoughts about traffic congestion, traffic calming, and other transportation issues.
 - Comments about the need for walkable neighborhoods, commercial development off Main Street, and the desire for more multi-use trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
- **Roll Plot (aerial map print-outs):** The roll plot maps of the project boundary were useful in supporting conversation between attendees and members of the project team. At future events, it may be helpful to print them at an even larger scale and provide more sharpies/markers to make comments easier to read.
 - **Flyer:** While only about 1/3 of attendees took a flyer, it was still worth having them to provide them with easy to access project information after they left the open house.
 - **QR codes:** It was useful to have QR codes on all the display boards and in different places throughout the room. It helped attendees quickly access the website, interactive map, and survey. In the days following the open house, we’ve received more than 50 survey responses.



Please sign in to let us know you were here!

Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Hebbie Brown	909 Constitution Ave.	mrs_db@hotmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Carolyn Sewier	PO Box 1201 Billings 59105	carolyn.sewier eyrpa.org	I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other <i>Exec Dir. of NPO</i>
Frank Munson	1445 Las Palmas Ave	frank.munson623@ yahoo.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Corrine Kelly	1317 N. Church	corrine2000@bresnan. net	I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
STEPHANIE HAIDER	729 ARONSON		I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Kelly Stokman	1522 Wicks Lane	stokmanhouse@sbcglobal. net	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
			I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Please sign in to let us know you were here!

Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Connie Hayes	445 cherry Hills Rd	hayeshiker@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Mitchell Hayes	645 cherry Hills Rd	hayesgare@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Lavonne Anderson	1093 Lincoln Ln.	none	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Steve Davies	1164 Calico	South Fork mt. gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Scott Dornfeld * Larry Brewster Address	744 Arbor Hills Dr	sdornfeld51@gmail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
LEE TOSTERUD	1239 Benjamin Blvd		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Emily Hunt	911 Ortega St	justinhunte@yahoo.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Please sign in to let us know you were here!

Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Jeff Roach	246 Sharrow Lane Billings, MT 59109	Roachj@billingsmt.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Kate Joyce	596 Sudan Pl 59105		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Paul Downey	2139 Ridgeview 59105		<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Steve Shandera	1109 N 31st Street Blgs 59101	SKshandera@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident (former) <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Lynnette Turbos	1429 Las Palmas Ave 59105	lynnette.turbos@adl.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Brad Kelsch Marlene Kelsch	2338 Riverrocks Dr. 59105	1426renwood@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
TAM RODIER	151 ERICKSON CT W 59105	rodier.t@billingsmt.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Please sign in to let us know you were here!

Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Brenda Berns	1023 Babcock	bjirges55961@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Denis Pitman	1730 Bitterroot Dr	dpitman1@aol.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Lizy Seekins	380 Camel Pt	lizseekins@aol.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
WJH	2232 Rodgers Dr	saugawm@dartmouth.edu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Rose Cook	2332 River Oaks	grcook@brasnane.net	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Ken & Vonna Hansen	230 Joy Lane		<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Wayne Freisatz	3003 Bitterroot	WFreisatz@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Please sign in to let us know you were here!

Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Erica Shea	800 Sargeant at Arms Blgs 59105	ebshea@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Doug Anderson	555 Wignam	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
William (Bill) and Margaret (Meg) Abel	1432 Las Palmas Ave. Blgs 59105	abelav8r@aol.com tchr406@aol.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Bill Cole		coleb@billingsmt.gov	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
John Sindelar Laurel Desjarlais	POB 50221 Billings MT 59105	sindelarjohn@hotmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Ian Davidson	252 Sahara Dr 59105	ifkdavidson@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Feresa Larsen	120 MorningSide Ln 59105		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Tom Roberts	838 Wicks Ln #5	mtomr01@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Zach Kirkemo	1421 Cascade Ave	zkirkemo@mt.gov	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
ALEX FOLDER	2003 Willowbrook way	alex.folder@westchurchofmont.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
MARK & Kim Welzenbach	257 Ashley Cts.	welzenbachk@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Bridget + Valorie Sweat	815 Kale Dr	vsweat@aol.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Barb Dornfeld	744 Arbor Hills Dr	beedorn65@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
HOWIE CRAVGAARD			<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Nathan + Elisa Mattioli	255 Ash Log Ct W	n.mattioli@dowl.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Monica Plecker		mplecker@uellsmsm	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Nancy Steel		nsteel@brssn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Barbara & Allan Nies		banies@msn.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Victoria Edwards	917 Artega St.	victoriadisconui@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Roy Neese		rangan@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Pam Ellis	2000 Outlook Dr	pamellis50@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Amber Uzelac	2415 1st Ave N Big Sky 59101	amberu@homefrontmt.org	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Steve + Jan Edwards	1832 Barrett Rd 59105		<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Cindy Olandt Mark Halverson	1435 Benjamin Blvd 59105	ozhal206@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Jennifer Owen	906 Royal Ave	owenj@billingsmt.gov	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Aaron Kurokawa	646 Boca Raton Rd	aaronk819@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Jill Lee Miller	1663 Picador Pl	milljill1205@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Cheryl + Jim Hoover	2315 Columbine	satsuma67@gmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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Name (first and last)	Address	Email*	I am a:
Cathy Andersen	555 Wigwam Tol Billings	cathy423@bresnan.net	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Page			I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Chuck Barthuly	300 EASTWATE CR. 59105	chuck@betterbillings.com	I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
DONOVAN MOSSER	237 QUIET WATER AVE. BLGS. 59105	DMOSSER@SECBYS.COM	I am a: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Vivian Zabrocki	890 Silver Dollar 59105	vzabrocki@gmail.com	I am a: <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
JENNIFER MCKEL	1194 CORTEZ AVE	JMCKEL78@HOTMAIL.COM	I am a: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other
Kyle Nelson	1402 Watson Peak Rd	Kylewadenelson@gmail.com	I am a: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Resident <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heights Business Owner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interested Party/Other

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BILLINGS HEIGHTS
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

OPEN HOUSE


SEPTEMBER 25, 2024
5 TO 7 P.M.

Join us to learn more about the Billings Heights
Neighborhood Plan and help shape the future
of the Heights!



INTRODUCTION

START
HERE

- 1 Sign in to let us know you were here!
- 2 Anyone with a lanyard name tag is with the project team—ask us questions!
- 3 Display boards with the  icon include prompts to help inspire comments, suggestions, and ideas. Use the designated post-it notes, markers, and stickers to share your thoughts on the Idea Boards and map print-outs around the room.
- 4 Scan the QR code at the bottom of this board to visit the website, where you can complete the Engagement Survey, comment on the Interactive Map, and more!



PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Billings, Yellowstone County, and the Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) are updating the 2006 Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan to help guide continued development of the Heights over the next 20 years.

The purpose of this open house is to give you an opportunity to help create a vision for the future of your neighborhood.

PROJECT TEAM*



*The project team also includes a Steering Committee of community leaders and Heights residents to help guide the planning process and promote public engagement. A full list of committee members can be found on the project website.

FOCUS AREAS

We'll be looking at the current status and anticipated trends for:



Land Use & Development



Community & Public Facilities



Transportation & Connectivity



WHY IS THIS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN IMPORTANT?

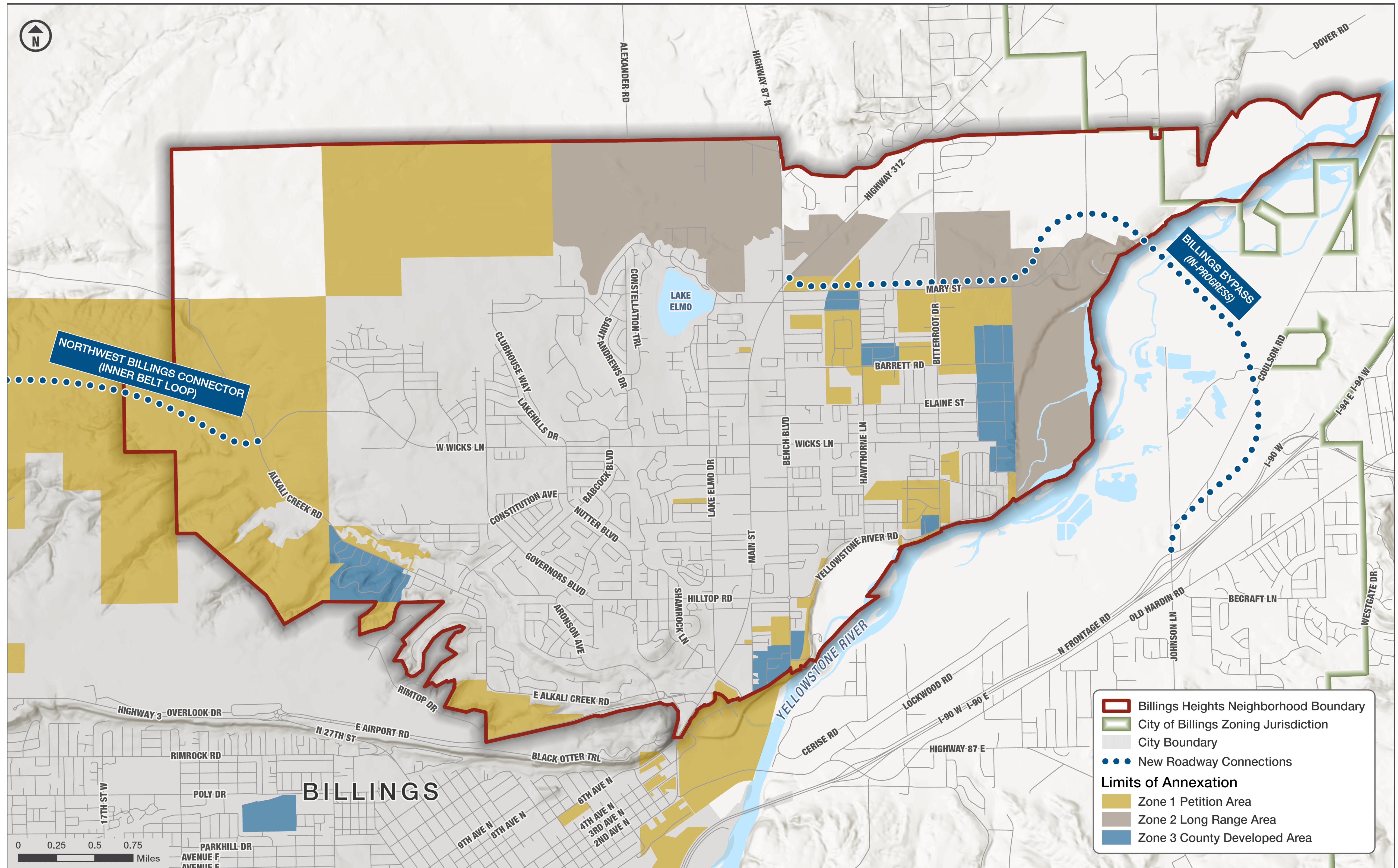
-  As the Billings Heights continues to grow, it's important to have a roadmap for future land use and transportation planning that incorporates technical data/analysis, public participation, and practical implementation strategies.
-  The updated plan will serve as a tool for making informed decisions about the future of the Billings Heights that reflects community needs.
-  It will also update the neighborhood's Future Land Use Map. Per the new Montana Land Use Planning Act, this will help inform the city-wide Growth Policy and Projected Land Use Map to help guide future zoning and development considerations.



What is your vision for the Billings Heights over the next 20 years?



BOUNDARY FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN UPDATE



WHAT'S NEW SINCE 2006?



Population growth (the Heights now houses about 1/3 of Billings' total population).



“Project Re:Code” established new zoning requirements with the purpose of adapting to current needs, encouraging development, and preserving neighborhoods.



Transportation system developments

- Bench Boulevard
- Skyway Drive
- Billings Bypass (in-progress)



New school, parks, neighborhoods

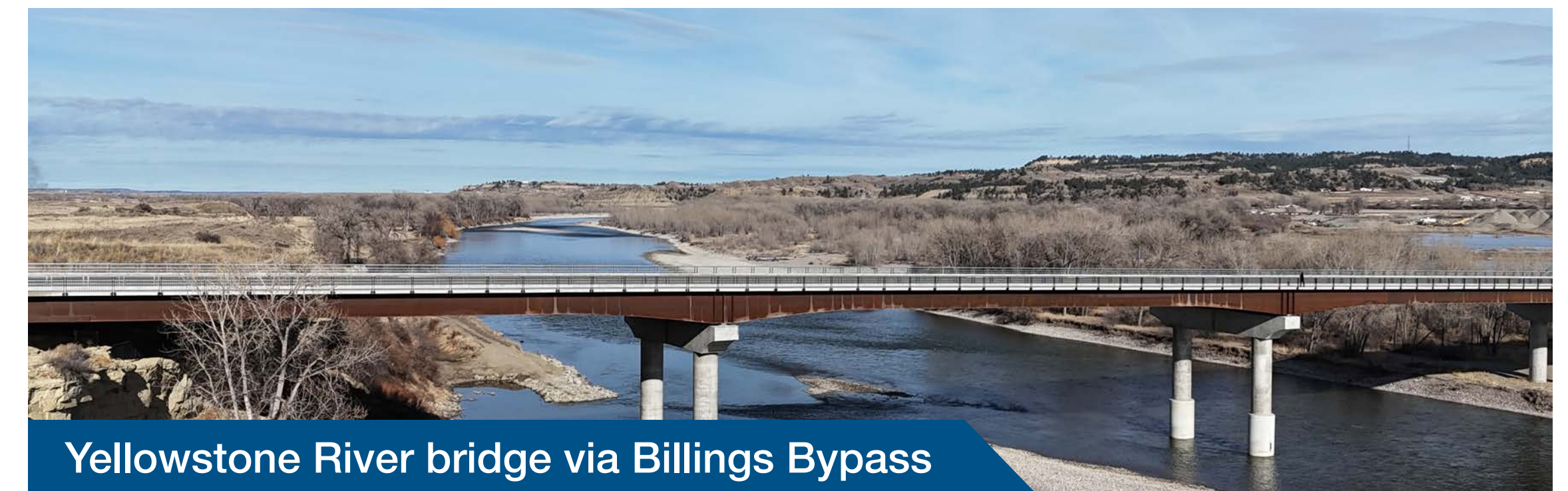
- Medicine Crow Middle School
- High Sierra Dog Park, Dover Park, etc.
- Oasis Water Park
- New health care facilities



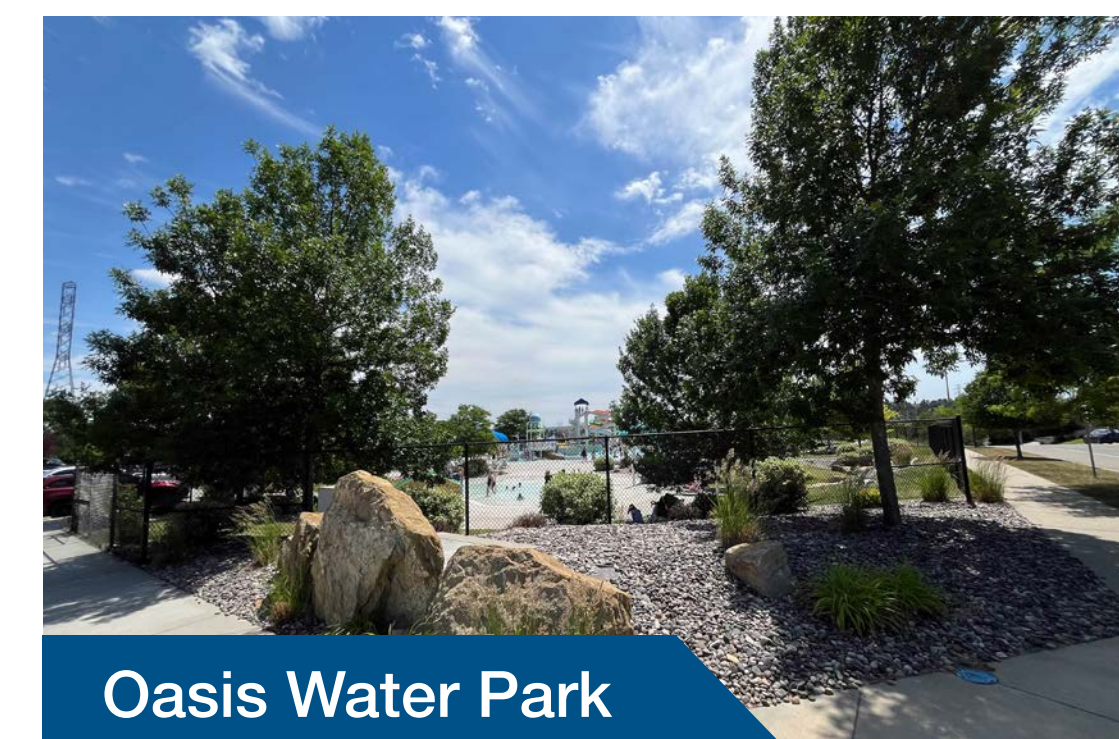
Skyway Drive



High Sierra Dog Park



Yellowstone River bridge via Billings Bypass



Oasis Water Park



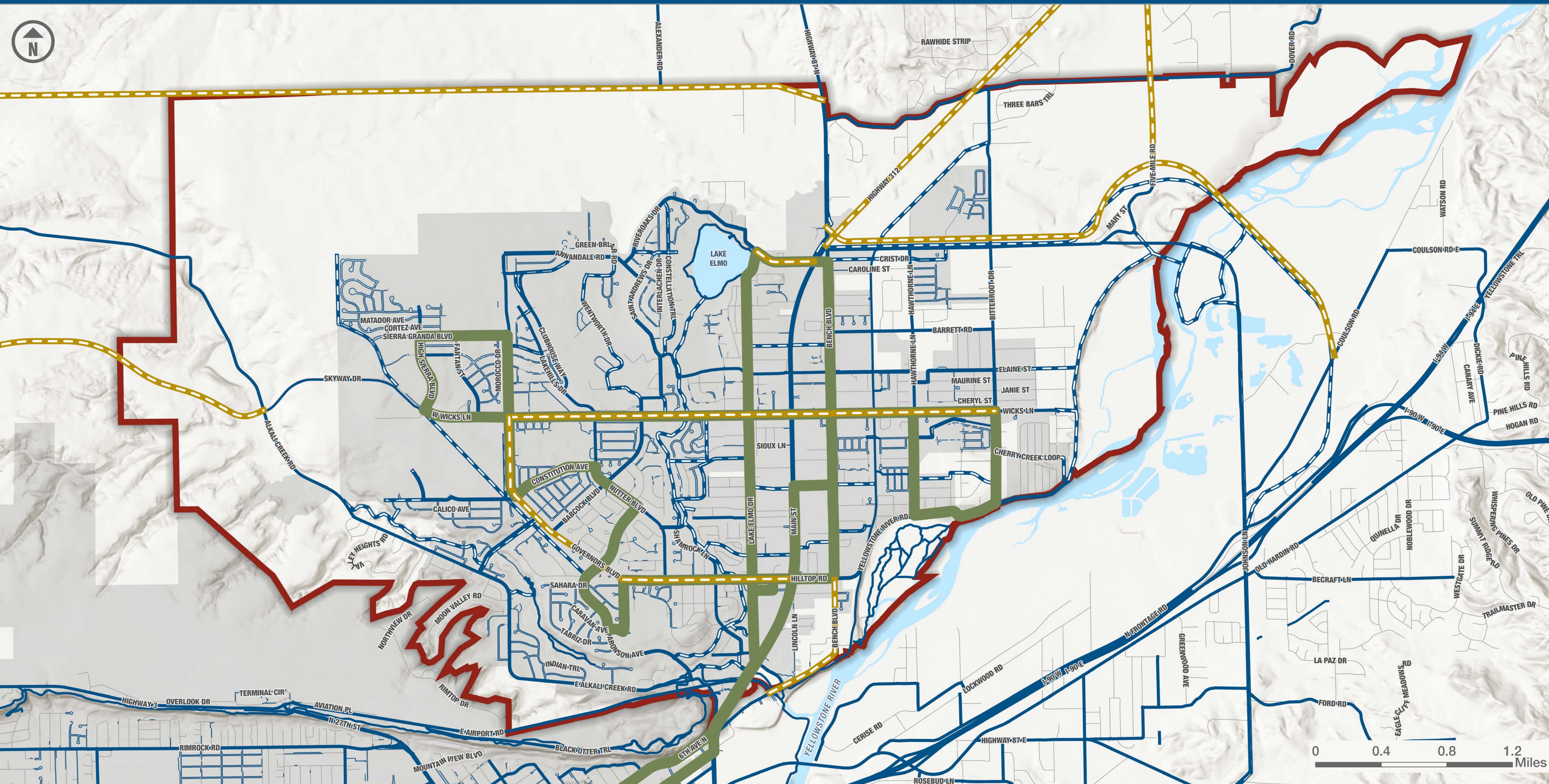
Heights Clinic Family Medicine



What other improvements have you seen in the Heights since 2006? What has stayed the same?



TRANSPORTATION & CONNECTIVITY



 Billings Heights Neighborhood Boundary

 City Boundary

Transportation Route

 Planned Road Project (new construction or improvements)

 Proposed Bike/Pedestrian Route

 Existing Bike/Pedestrian Route

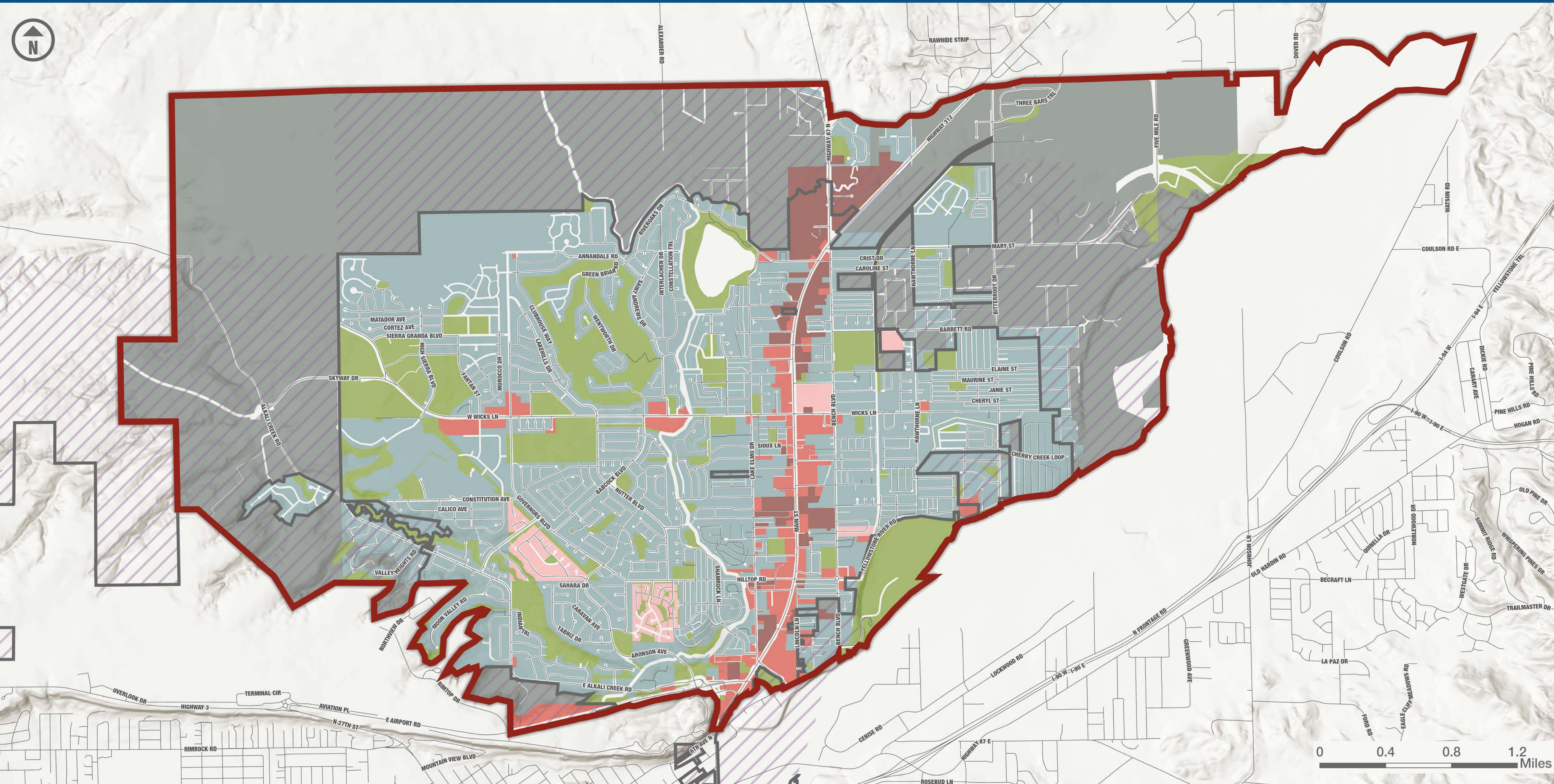
 Existing Transit Route



What are the biggest transportation issues impacting the Heights?



CURRENT LAND USE



 Billings Heights Neighborhood Boundary

 City Boundary


Zoning Classification*

 Commercial

 Mixed-Use

 Planned Development

 Residential Neighborhood

 Rural Residential/Agriculture

 Public and Open Space

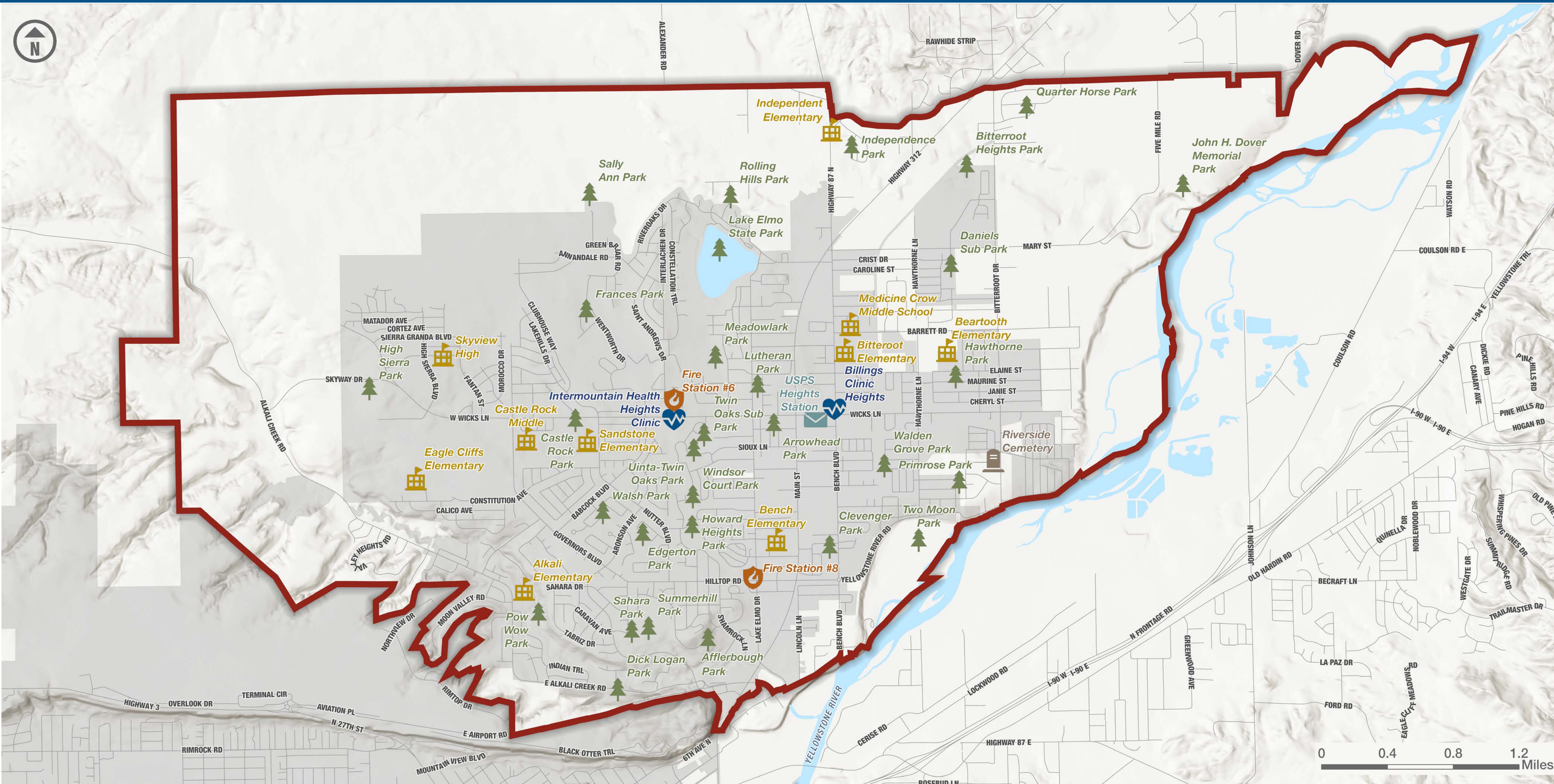
**Zoning classifications on this map represent categories of zoning districts. Each classification includes multiple zoning districts to show a simplified view of current land use in the Heights.*



Where would you like to see residential and commercial growth in the Heights?



COMMUNITY & PUBLIC FACILITIES



Billings Heights Neighborhood Boundary

City Boundary

Public Facility

Cemetery

Park

Post Office

School

Fire Station

Medical Center

0 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles



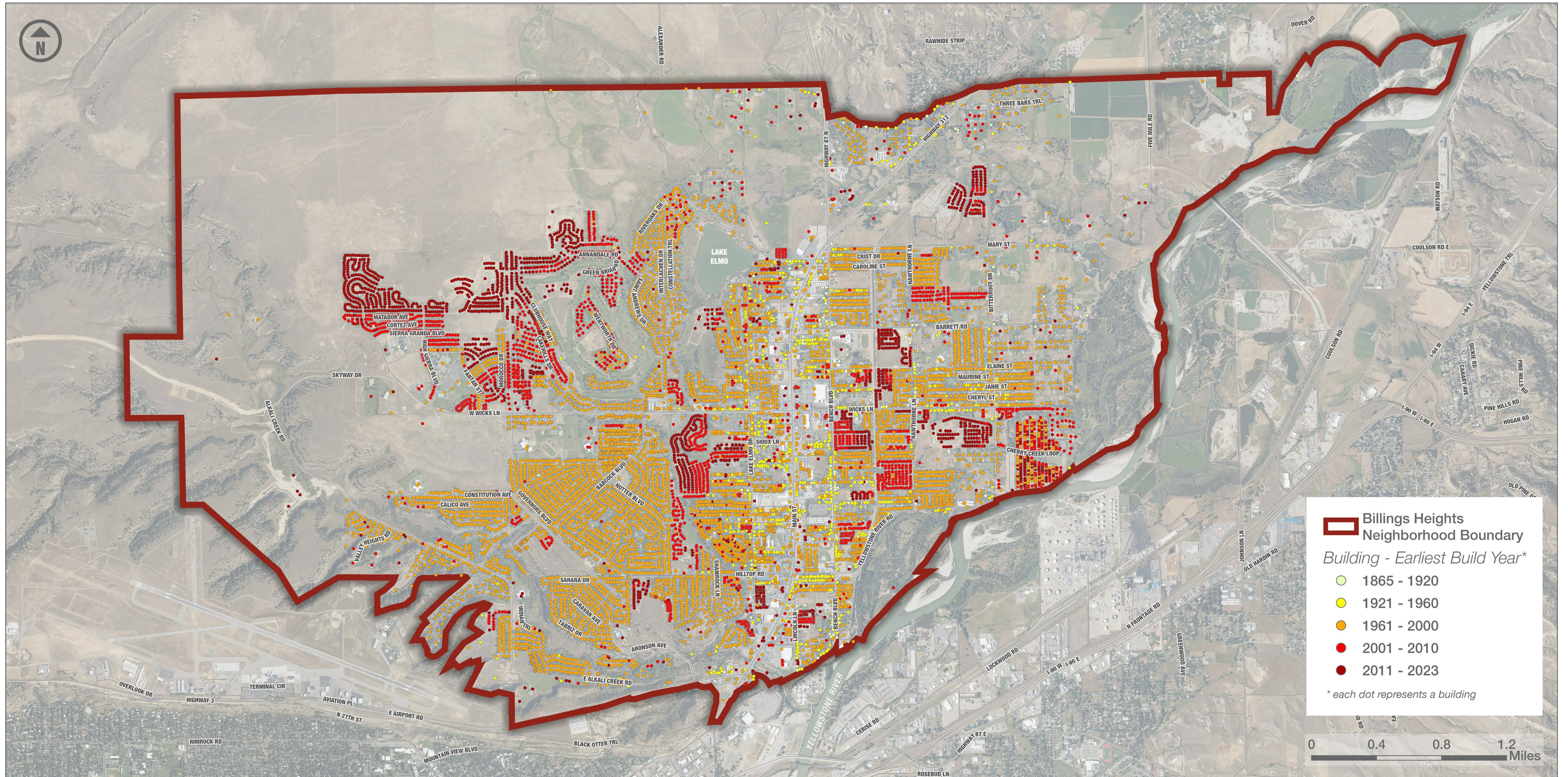
What community facilities are most important to you? Are there gaps or areas for improvement?

Stay Informed!

Learn more and share your thoughts by visiting billingsheightsplan.com or scanning the QR code to the right.



HEIGHTS DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME



PROJECT TIMELINE



KEY TERMS

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN: An urban planning approach that helps shape new and existing neighborhoods. Neighborhood plans typically involve a clear vision and goals, recommendations for future development and implementation, and public participation to make sure the plan reflects the community's needs and values.

ZONING: Local laws or regulations that govern how property can and cannot be used in certain areas. Zoning districts are typically more specific than land use designations in Future Land Use maps. For example, Billings zoning districts include: N3 Suburban Neighborhood; CMU1 Corridor Mixed-Use; P1 Open Space, Parks, Recreation; and many others.

LIMITS OF ANNEXATION: Areas within these limits are under consideration to be annexed into the City of Billings in the future. The City and Yellowstone County define these areas to strategically and efficiently manage growth and delivery of municipal services.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP: Provides recommendations for future land uses within an area. Unlike zoning districts, future land use designations are not law and do not impact current uses on properties. Instead, the Future Land Use Map is a high-level view of what land uses the community envisions in different areas of the neighborhood. This map can highlight opportunities for future growth and development.



GET INVOLVED

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Your feedback is essential in creating a Neighborhood Plan that represents the community's vision.

Help spread the word by sharing the QR codes on the right with your neighbors!

1

COMPLETE THE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY*

**(Paper versions of this survey are available upon request.)*



2

ADD COMMENTS TO THE INTERACTIVE MAP

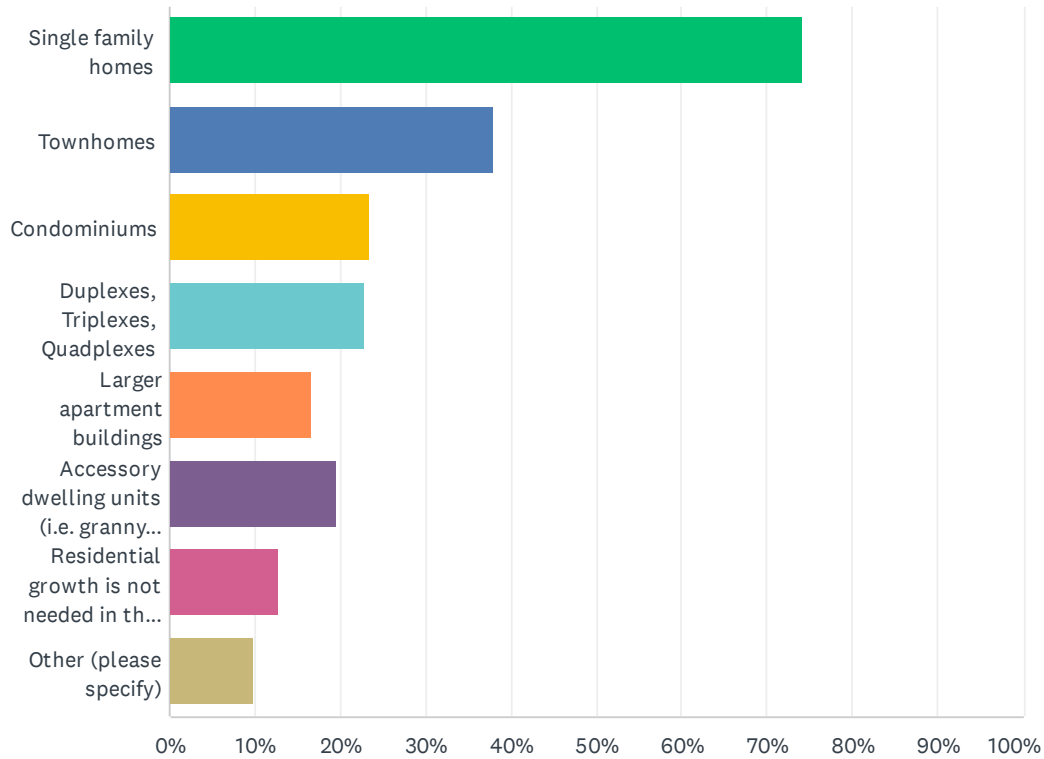


Q1 In a sentence, please describe your vision for the Heights over the next 20 years.

Answered: 130 Skipped: 3

Q2 Which types of residential growth does the Heights need? (Select all that apply)

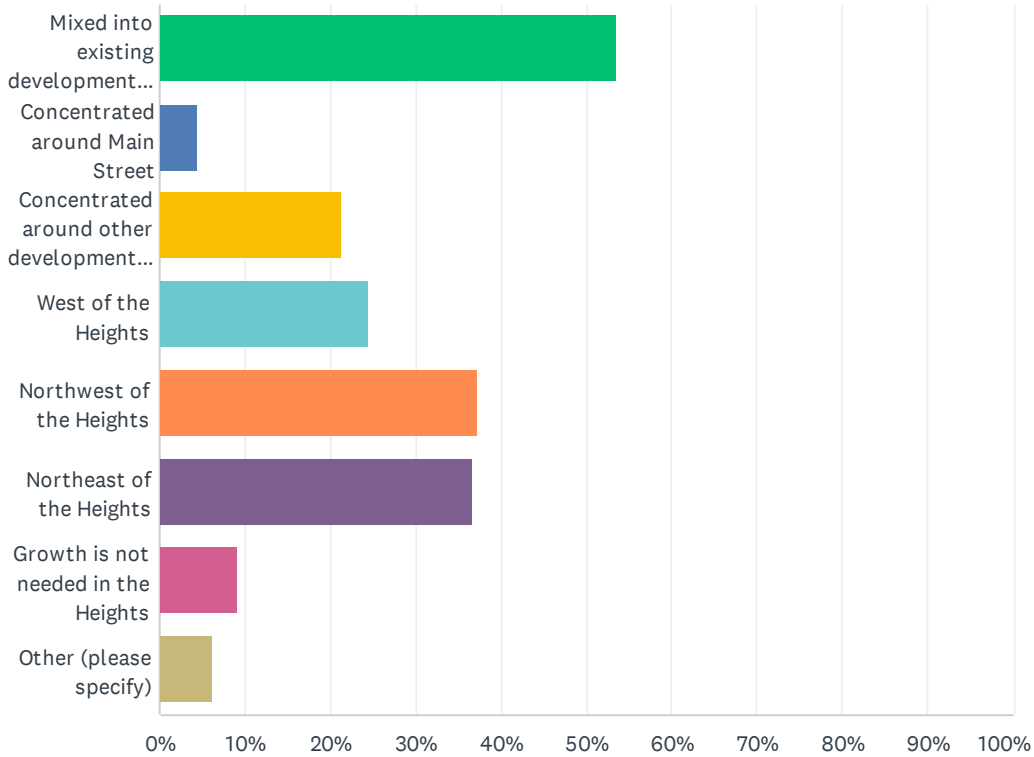
Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single family homes	74.24%	98
Townhomes	37.88%	50
Condominiums	23.48%	31
Duplexes, Triplexes, Quadplexes	22.73%	30
Larger apartment buildings	16.67%	22
Accessory dwelling units (i.e. granny flats, guest houses, etc. that are often used to generate rental income etc.)	19.70%	26
Residential growth is not needed in the Heights	12.88%	17
Other (please specify)	9.85%	13
Total Respondents: 132		

Q3 Where should residential growth occur in the Heights area? (Select all locations that you think make sense for the Heights)

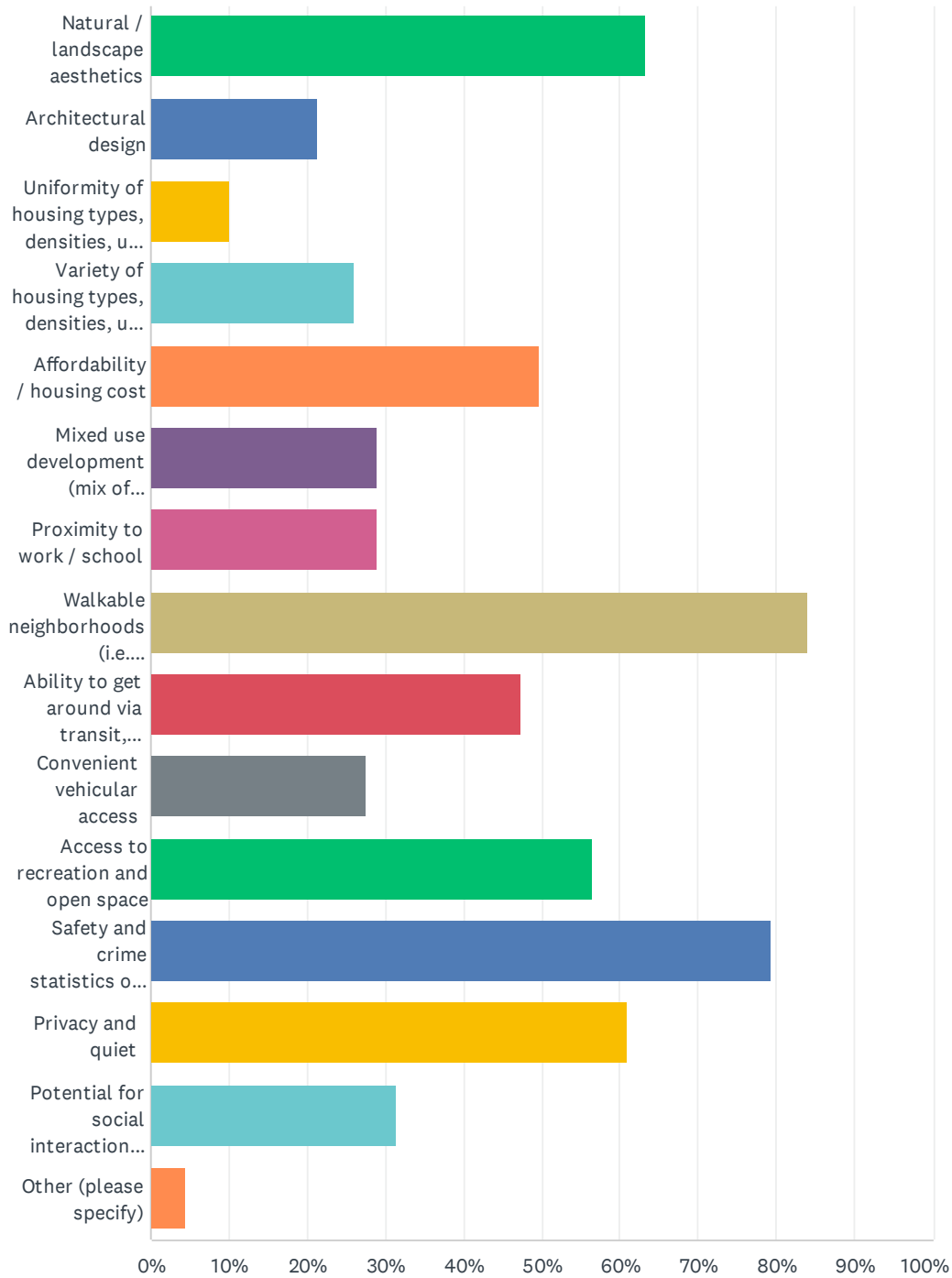
Answered: 131 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mixed into existing development areas (infill) or redevelopment	53.44%	70
Concentrated around Main Street	4.58%	6
Concentrated around other development centers / nodes	21.37%	28
West of the Heights	24.43%	32
Northwest of the Heights	37.40%	49
Northeast of the Heights	36.64%	48
Growth is not needed in the Heights	9.16%	12
Other (please specify)	6.11%	8
Total Respondents: 131		

Q4 What neighborhood characteristics are most important to you? (Select all that are most important to you)

Answered: 131 Skipped: 2

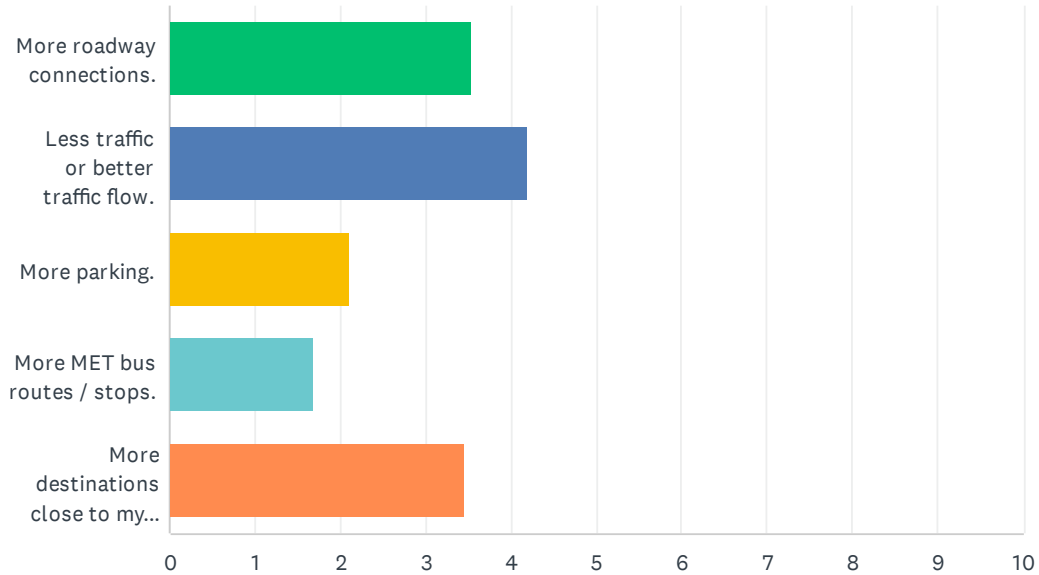


Community Engagement Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Natural / landscape aesthetics	63.36%	83
Architectural design	21.37%	28
Uniformity of housing types, densities, unit sizes, etc.	9.92%	13
Variety of housing types, densities, unit sizes, etc.	25.95%	34
Affordability / housing cost	49.62%	65
Mixed use development (mix of commercial and residential uses)	29.01%	38
Proximity to work / school	29.01%	38
Walkable neighborhoods (i.e. sidewalks, trees, street lights, etc.)	83.97%	110
Ability to get around via transit, walking, biking, etc.	47.33%	62
Convenient vehicular access	27.48%	36
Access to recreation and open space	56.49%	74
Safety and crime statistics of the neighborhood	79.39%	104
Privacy and quiet	61.07%	80
Potential for social interaction with neighbors	31.30%	41
Other (please specify)	4.58%	6
Total Respondents: 131		

Q5 When it comes to getting around the Heights and visiting your preferred destinations, what types of access would be most helpful to you? (Use the arrows to rank the options below with the item at the top being the most helpful and the one at the bottom being the least helpful)

Answered: 131 Skipped: 2



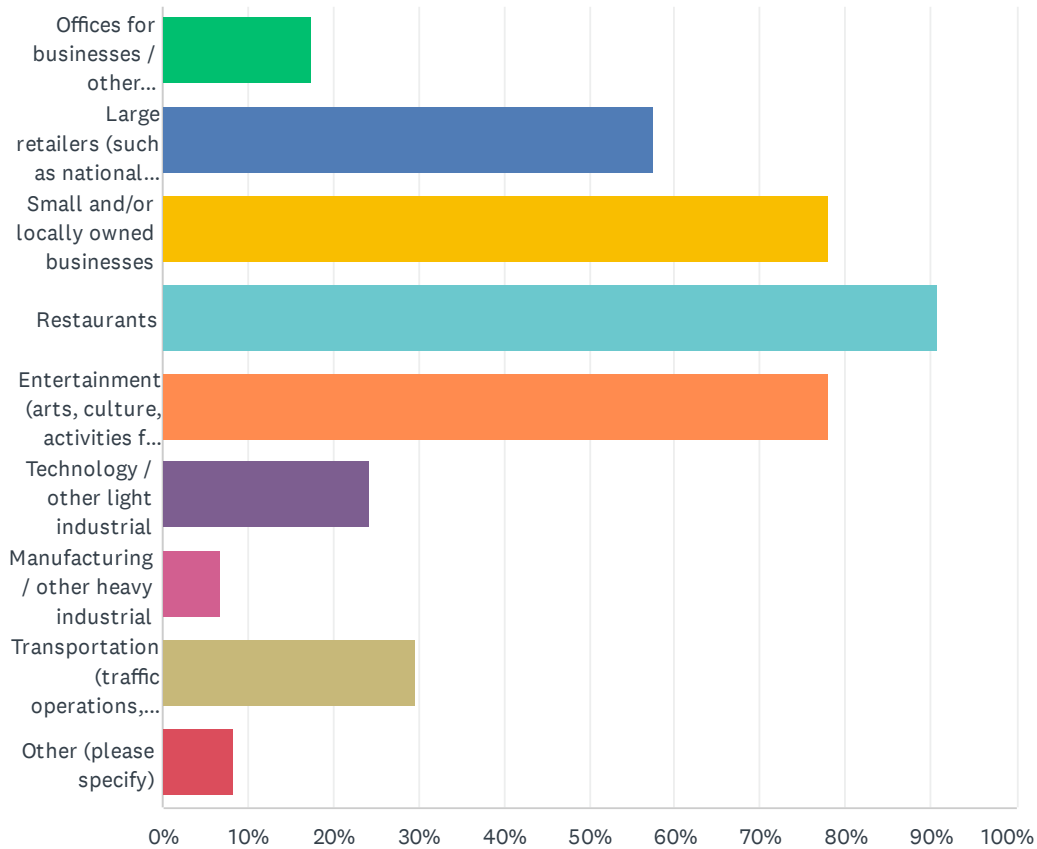
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
More roadway connections.	16.03% 21	38.17% 50	32.82% 43	10.69% 14	2.29% 3	131	3.55
Less traffic or better traffic flow.	45.80% 60	32.82% 43	17.56% 23	3.82% 5	0.00% 0	131	4.21
More parking.	1.53% 2	4.58% 6	21.37% 28	48.09% 63	24.43% 32	131	2.11
More MET bus routes / stops.	0.00% 0	7.63% 10	9.92% 13	25.95% 34	56.49% 74	131	1.69
More destinations close to my neighborhood (i.e., parks, shops, health services, etc.)	36.64% 48	16.79% 22	18.32% 24	11.45% 15	16.79% 22	131	3.45

Q6 Additional comments about housing and land use in the Heights:

Answered: 95 Skipped: 38

Q7 Which types of commercial and economic growth does the Heights need? (Select all that you think are most important)

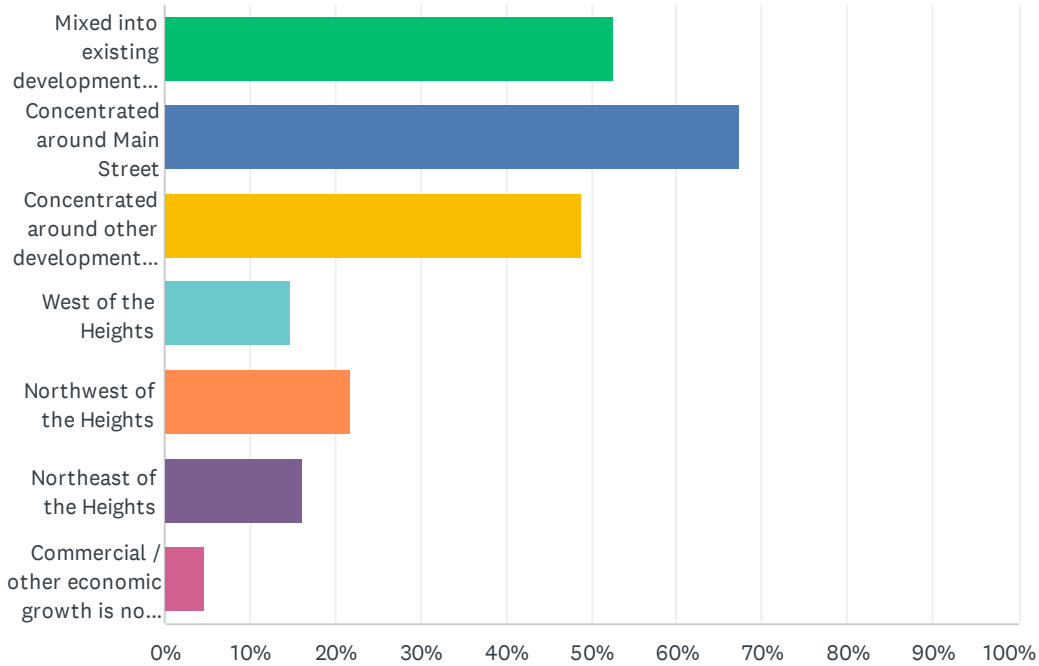
Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Offices for businesses / other organizations	17.42%	23
Large retailers (such as national chains)	57.58%	76
Small and/or locally owned businesses	78.03%	103
Restaurants	90.91%	120
Entertainment (arts, culture, activities for families, nightlife, etc)	78.03%	103
Technology / other light industrial	24.24%	32
Manufacturing / other heavy industrial	6.82%	9
Transportation (traffic operations, connectivity, pedestrian and bicycle access)	29.55%	39
Other (please specify)	8.33%	11
Total Respondents: 132		

Q8 Where should commercial and economic growth occur in the Heights area? (Select all locations that you think make sense for the Heights)

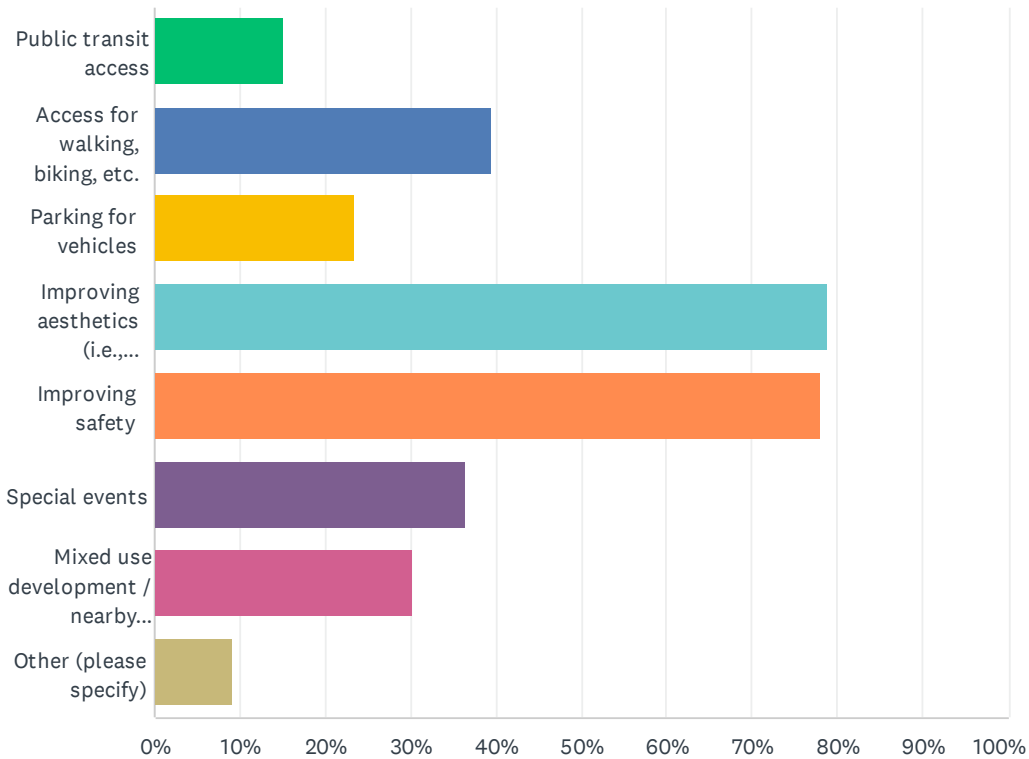
Answered: 129 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mixed into existing development areas (infill) or redevelopment	52.71%	68
Concentrated around Main Street	67.44%	87
Concentrated around other development centers / nodes	48.84%	63
West of the Heights	14.73%	19
Northwest of the Heights	21.71%	28
Northeast of the Heights	16.28%	21
Commercial / other economic growth is not needed in the Heights	4.65%	6
Total Respondents: 129		

Q9 What factors are most important for revitalizing Main Street and/or other commercial areas in the Heights? (Select all that you think are most important)

Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



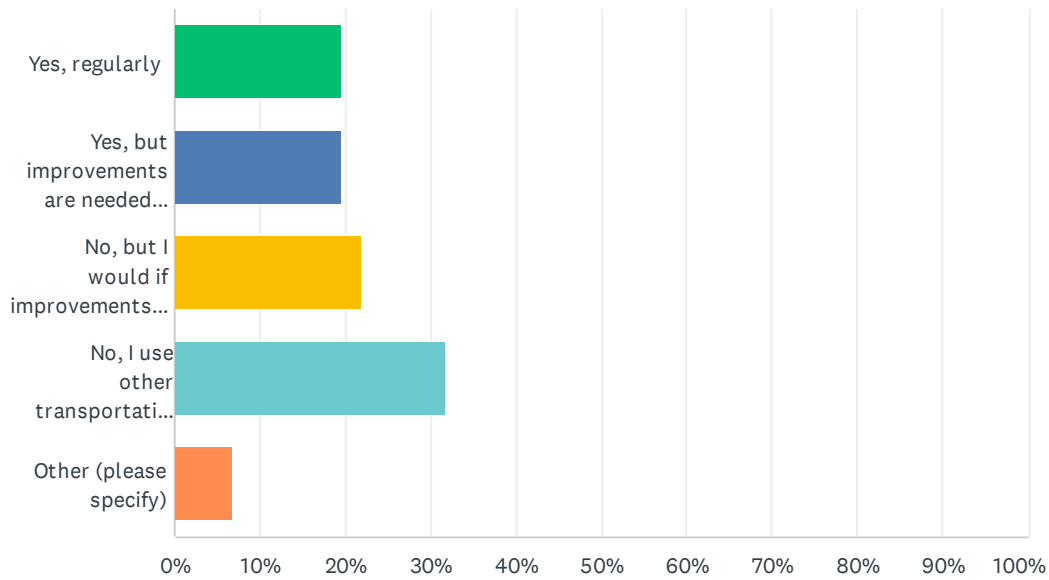
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public transit access	15.15%	20
Access for walking, biking, etc.	39.39%	52
Parking for vehicles	23.48%	31
Improving aesthetics (i.e., greenery, signage, landscaping, etc.)	78.79%	104
Improving safety	78.03%	103
Special events	36.36%	48
Mixed use development / nearby residential opportunities	30.30%	40
Other (please specify)	9.09%	12
Total Respondents: 132		

Q10 Additional comments about economic development in the Heights:

Answered: 79 Skipped: 54

Q11 Do you walk, bike, or use other non-motorized transportation modes?

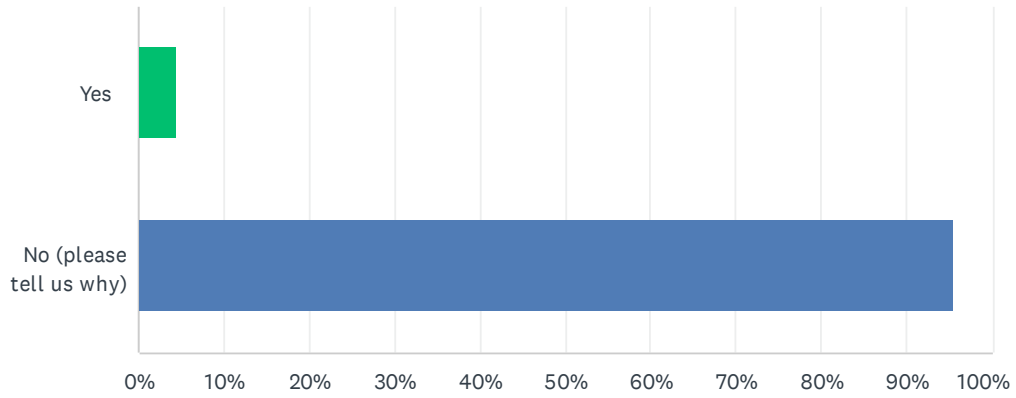
Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, regularly	19.70%	26
Yes, but improvements are needed (such as access / connectivity, types of facilities, maintenance, etc)	19.70%	26
No, but I would if improvements were made	21.97%	29
No, I use other transportation and am unlikely to use non-motorized modes	31.82%	42
Other (please specify)	6.82%	9
TOTAL		132

Q12 Do you use MET Transit?

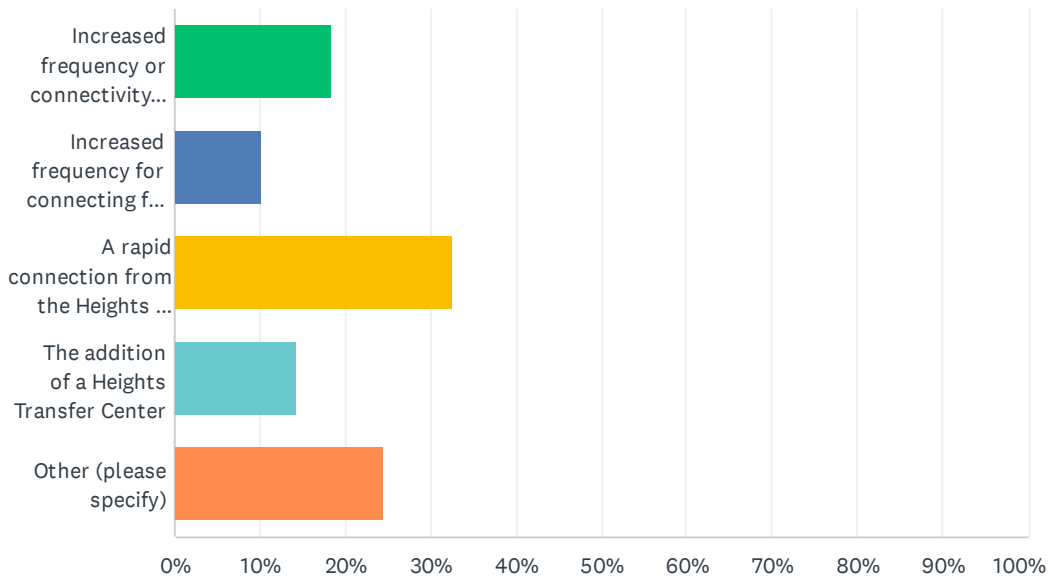
Answered: 131 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	4.58%	6
No (please tell us why)	95.42%	125
TOTAL		131

Q13 If you could change one thing about MET Transit, what would it be?

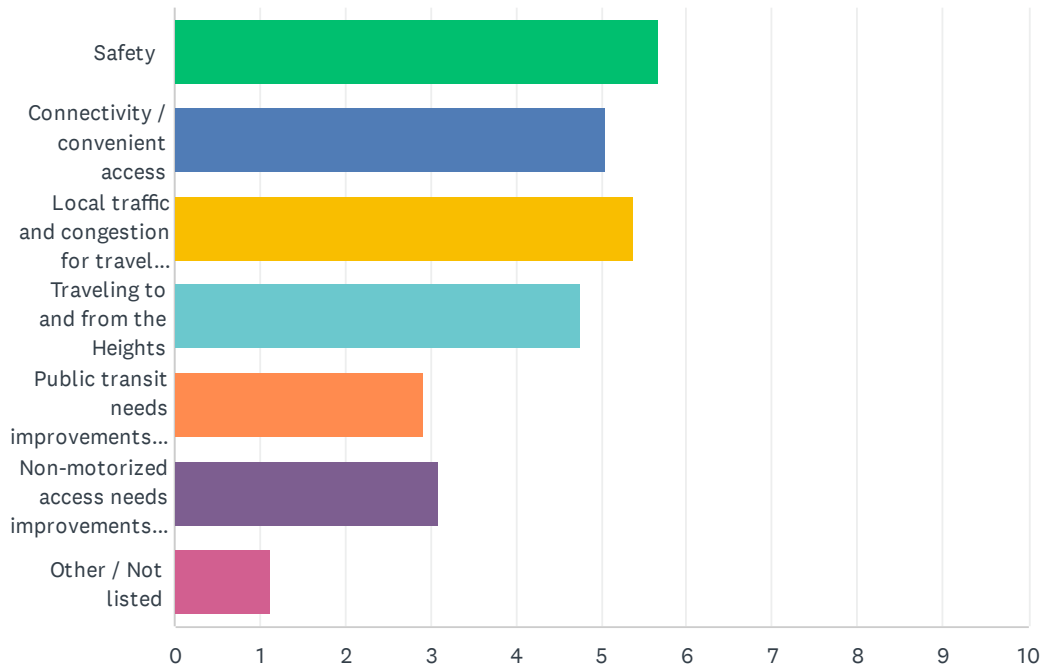
Answered: 126 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increased frequency or connectivity to other areas of the Heights	18.25%	23
Increased frequency for connecting from the Heights to Downtown	10.32%	13
A rapid connection from the Heights to the West End	32.54%	41
The addition of a Heights Transfer Center	14.29%	18
Other (please specify)	24.60%	31
TOTAL		126

Q14 Please rank the most significant transportation issues currently impacting the Heights (Use the arrows to rank the options below with the item at the top being the most helpful and the one at the bottom being the least helpful):

Answered: 130 Skipped: 3



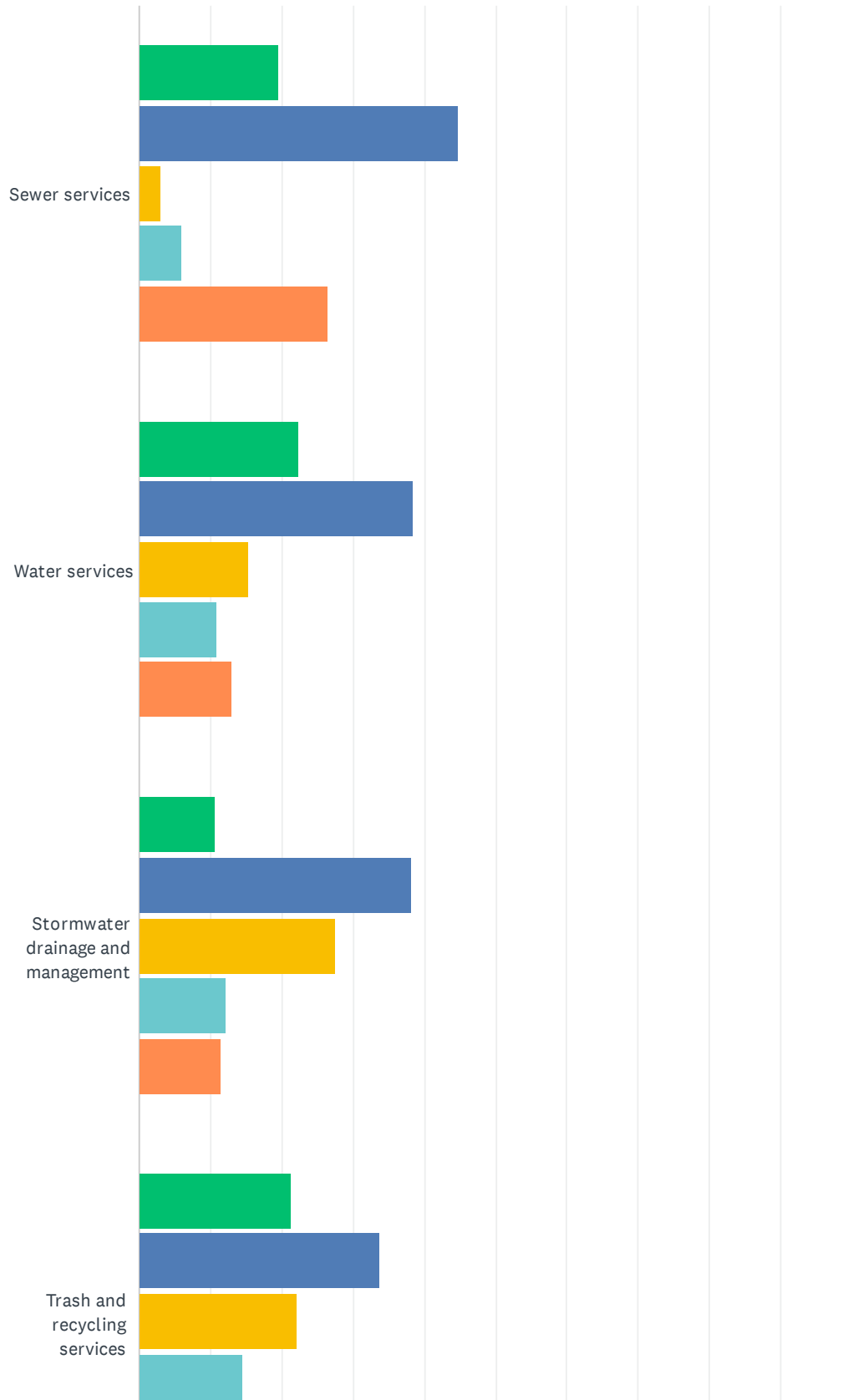
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	SCORE
Safety	38.46% 50	19.23% 25	23.85% 31	10.77% 14	5.38% 7	2.31% 3	0.00% 0	130	5.68
Connectivity / convenient access	15.38% 20	25.38% 33	25.38% 33	21.54% 28	6.92% 9	5.38% 7	0.00% 0	130	5.05
Local traffic and congestion for travel within the Heights	24.62% 32	26.15% 34	24.62% 32	14.62% 19	7.69% 10	2.31% 3	0.00% 0	130	5.38
Traveling to and from the Heights	13.85% 18	22.31% 29	12.31% 16	33.85% 44	13.08% 17	3.08% 4	1.54% 2	130	4.75
Public transit needs improvements (i.e. more bus stops/routes)	2.31% 3	1.54% 2	3.85% 5	9.23% 12	45.38% 59	36.15% 47	1.54% 2	130	2.92
Non-motorized access needs improvements (i.e. bicycle/walking paths)	4.62% 6	5.38% 7	10.00% 13	10.00% 13	18.46% 24	47.69% 62	3.85% 5	130	3.09
Other / Not listed	0.77% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.08% 4	3.08% 4	93.08% 121	130	1.14

Q15 Additional comments about transportation in the Heights:

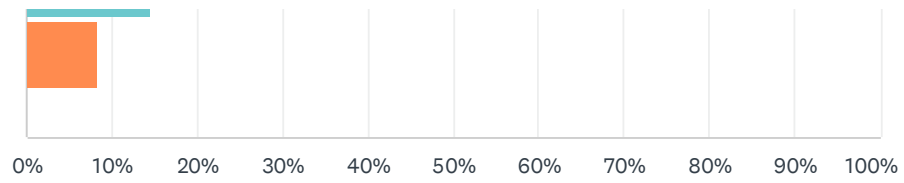
Answered: 82 Skipped: 51

Q16 INFRASTRUCTURE: The Heights is adequately served by:

Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



Community Engagement Survey

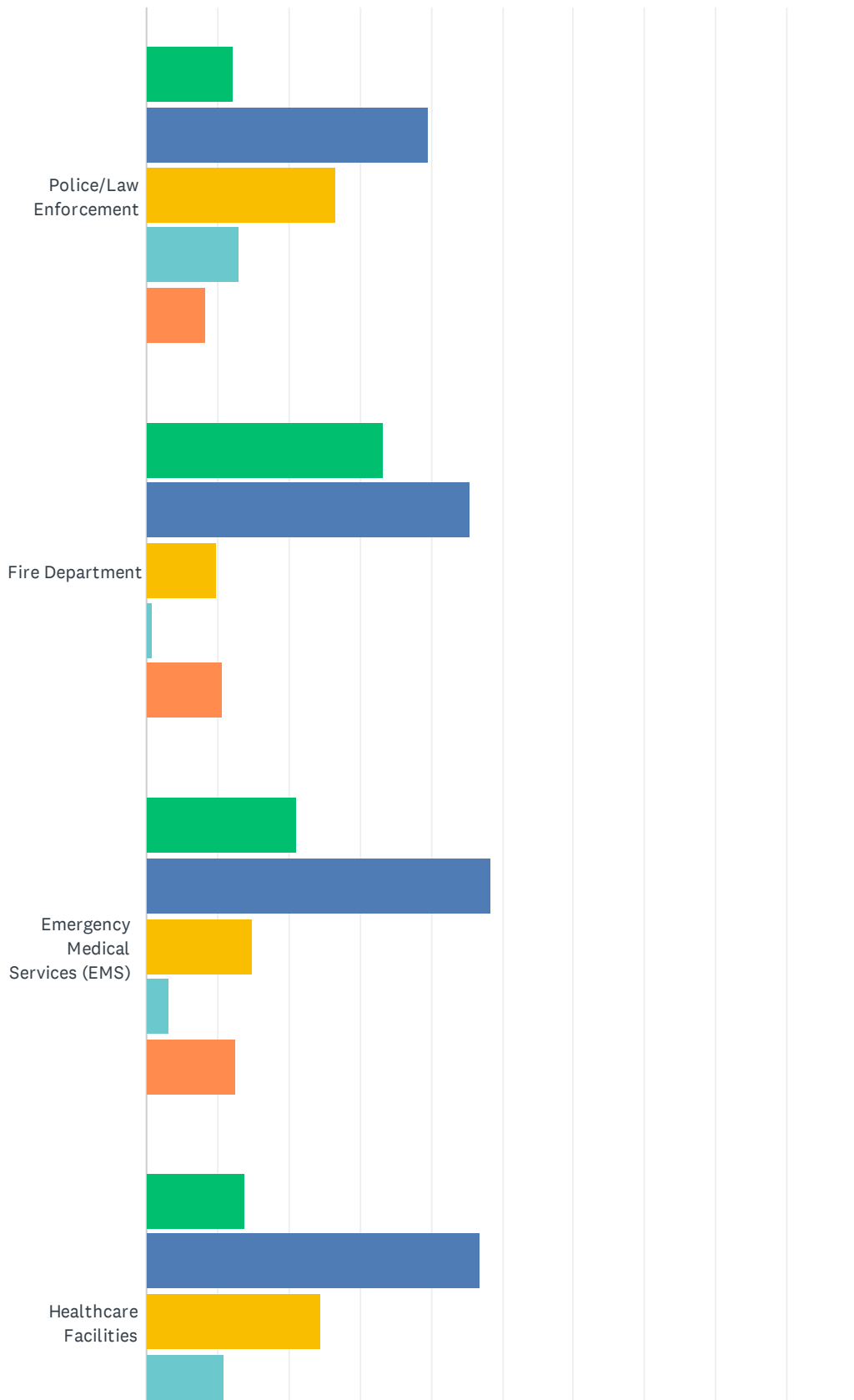


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 ■ Moderately...
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■ No Opinion ...

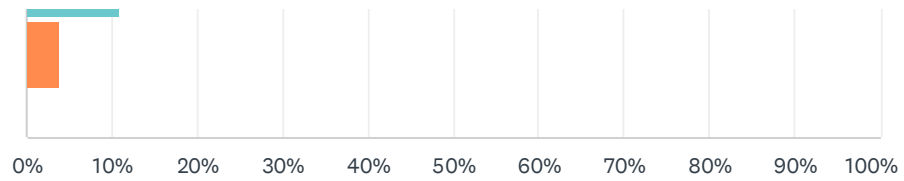
	STRONGLY AGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO OPINION / NA	TOTAL
Sewer services	19.70% 26	44.70% 59	3.03% 4	6.06% 8	26.52% 35	132
Water services	22.31% 29	38.46% 50	15.38% 20	10.77% 14	13.08% 17	130
Stormwater drainage and management	10.69% 14	38.17% 50	27.48% 36	12.21% 16	11.45% 15	131
Trash and recycling services	21.37% 28	33.59% 44	22.14% 29	14.50% 19	8.40% 11	131

Q17 PUBLIC SAFETY: Currently, the Heights is adequately served by:

Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



Community Engagement Survey

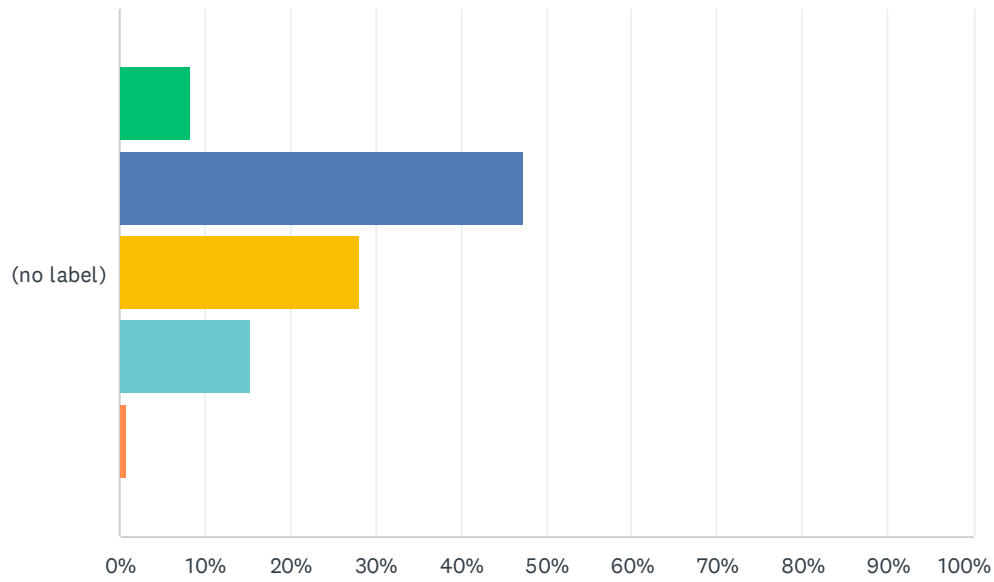


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 ■ Moderately...
 ■ Strongly Di...
■ No Opinion ...

	STRONGLY AGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO OPINION / NA	TOTAL
Police/Law Enforcement	12.21% 16	39.69% 52	26.72% 35	12.98% 17	8.40% 11	131
Fire Department	33.33% 44	45.45% 60	9.85% 13	0.76% 1	10.61% 14	132
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	21.09% 27	48.44% 62	14.84% 19	3.13% 4	12.50% 16	128
Healthcare Facilities	13.85% 18	46.92% 61	24.62% 32	10.77% 14	3.85% 5	130

Q18 PUBLIC SAFETY: The Heights is a safe area of Billings

Answered: 131 Skipped: 2

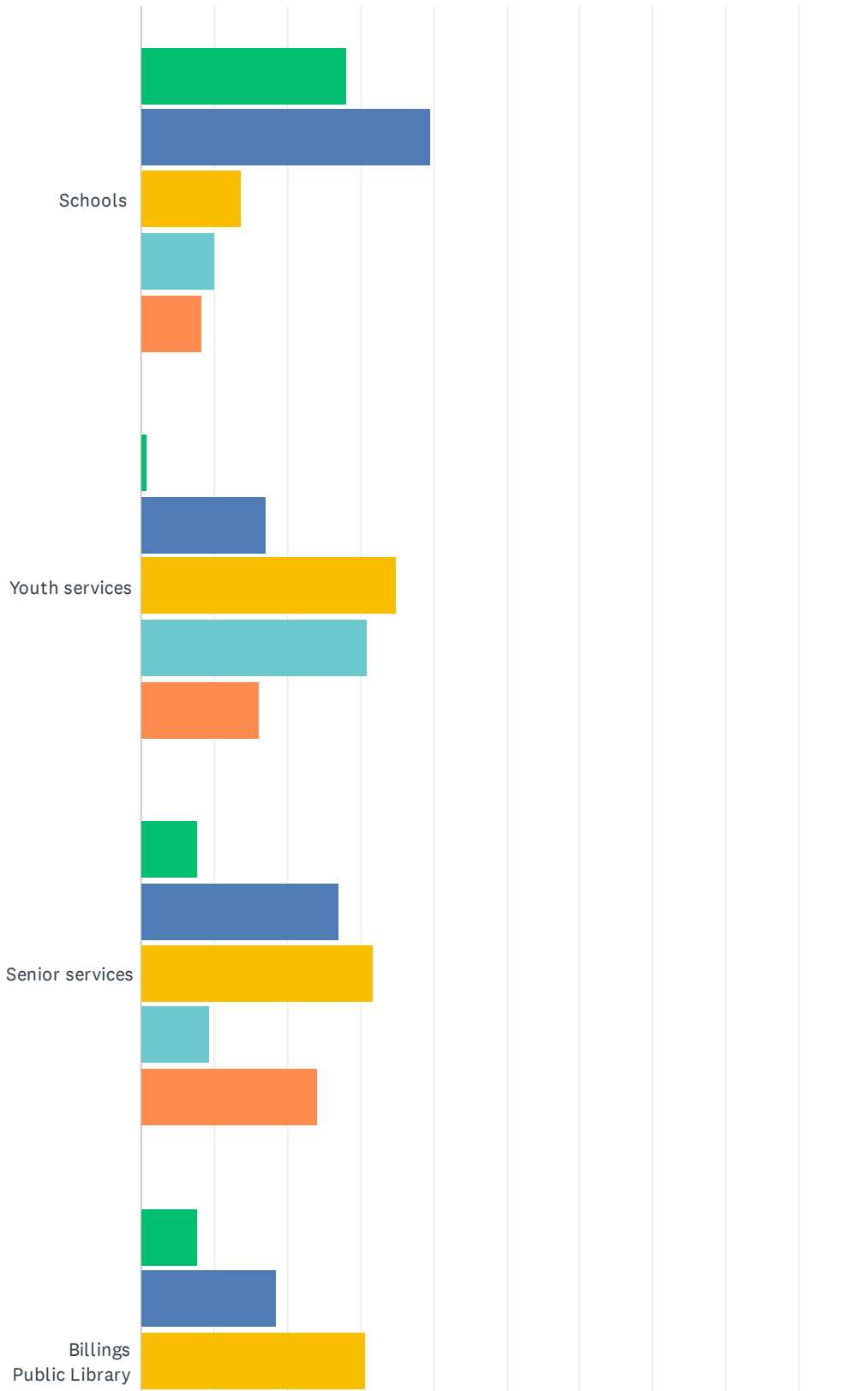


■ Strongly Ag...
 ■ Moderately...
 ■ Moderately...
 ■ Strongly Di...
 ■ No Opinion ...

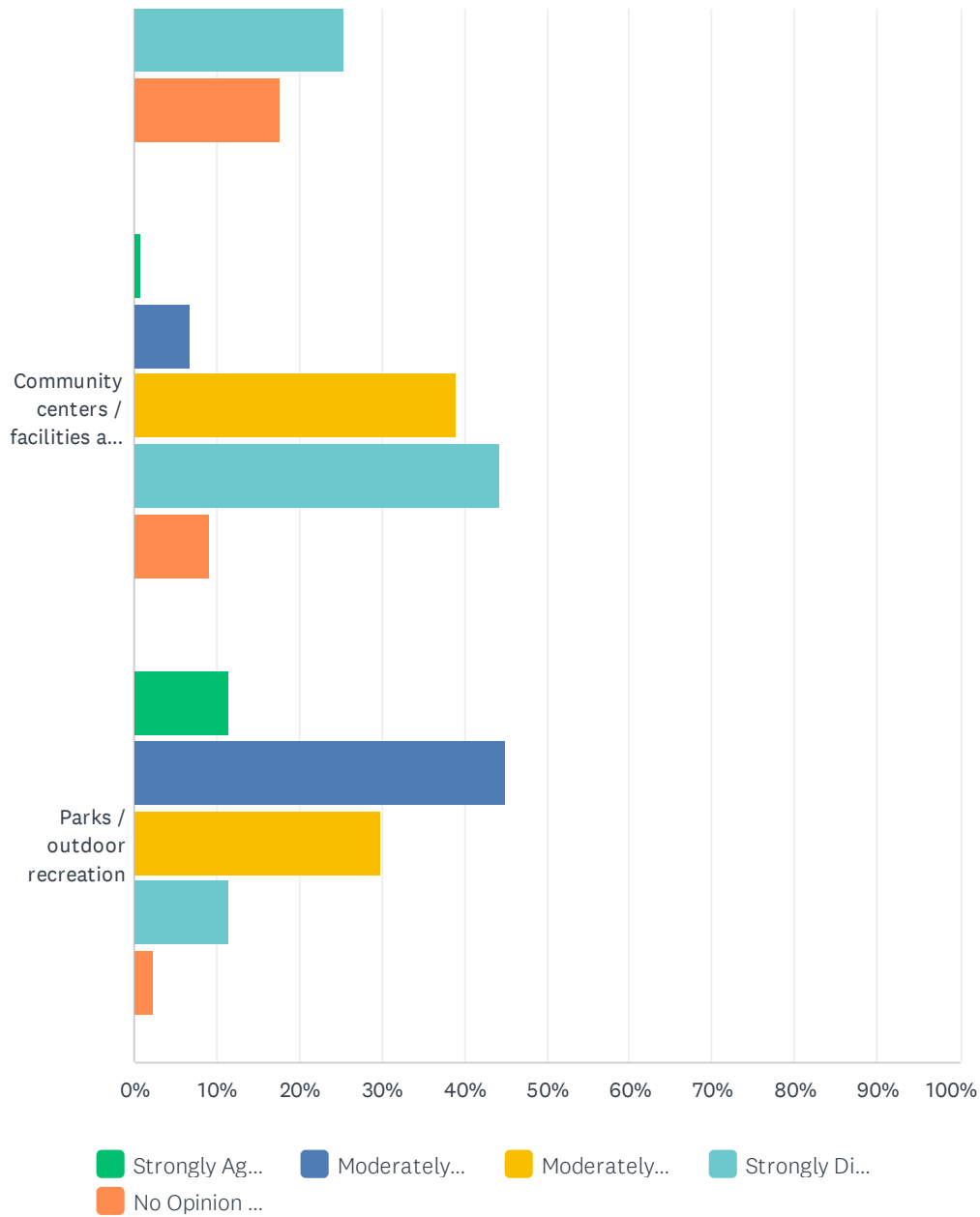
	STRONGLY AGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO OPINION / NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	8.40% 11	47.33% 62	28.24% 37	15.27% 20	0.76% 1	131	2.53

Q19 COMMUNITY FACILITIES: Currently, the Heights is adequately served by:

Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



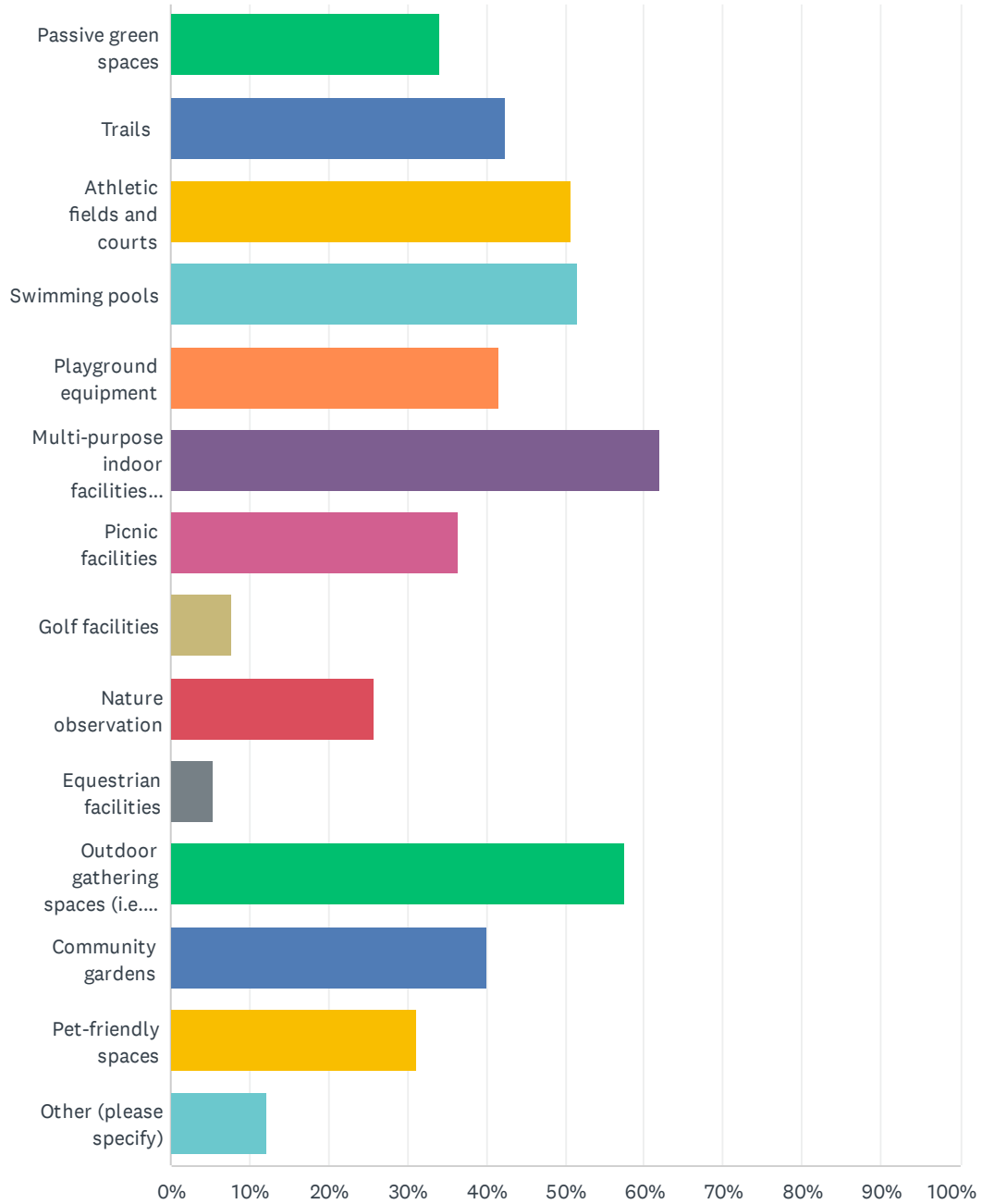
Community Engagement Survey



	STRONGLY AGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO OPINION / NA	TOTAL
Schools	28.24% 37	39.69% 52	13.74% 18	9.92% 13	8.40% 11	131
Youth services	0.78% 1	17.05% 22	34.88% 45	31.01% 40	16.28% 21	129
Senior services	7.75% 10	27.13% 35	31.78% 41	9.30% 12	24.03% 31	129
Billings Public Library	7.69% 10	18.46% 24	30.77% 40	25.38% 33	17.69% 23	130
Community centers / facilities and programs for all ages	0.76% 1	6.87% 9	38.93% 51	44.27% 58	9.16% 12	131
Parks / outdoor recreation	11.45% 15	45.04% 59	29.77% 39	11.45% 15	2.29% 3	131

Q20 PARKS & RECREATION: Which facilities are most needed at parks in the Heights? (Select all that are important to you)

Answered: 132 Skipped: 1

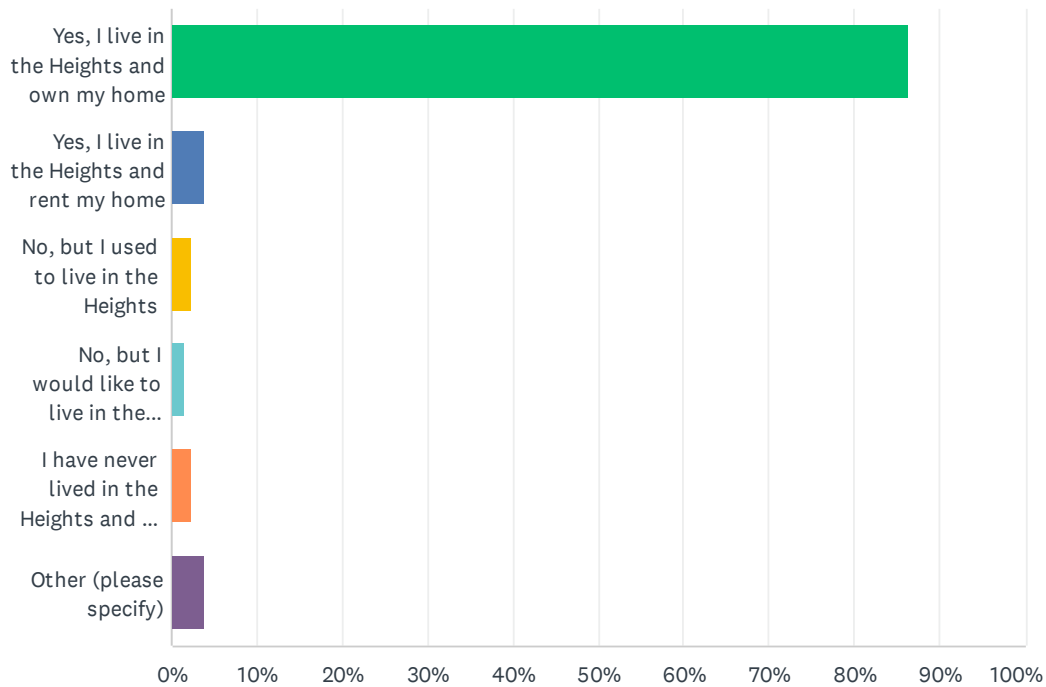


Community Engagement Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Passive green spaces	34.09%	45
Trails	42.42%	56
Athletic fields and courts	50.76%	67
Swimming pools	51.52%	68
Playground equipment	41.67%	55
Multi-purpose indoor facilities (i.e., events, meetings, etc)	62.12%	82
Picnic facilities	36.36%	48
Golf facilities	7.58%	10
Nature observation	25.76%	34
Equestrian facilities	5.30%	7
Outdoor gathering spaces (i.e., amphitheater)	57.58%	76
Community gardens	40.15%	53
Pet-friendly spaces	31.06%	41
Other (please specify)	12.12%	16
Total Respondents: 132		

Q21 Do you live in the Heights?

Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



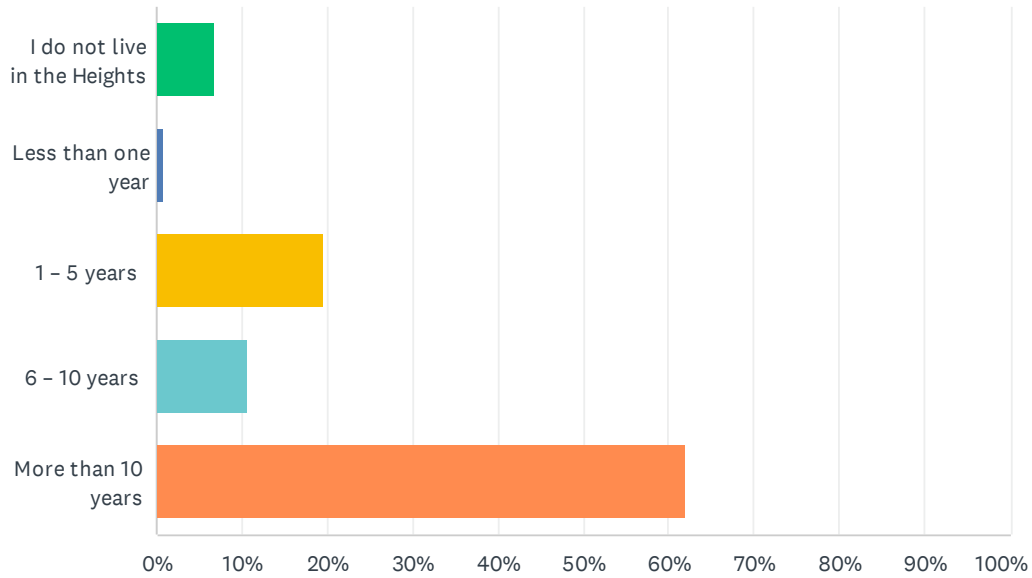
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I live in the Heights and own my home	86.36%	114
Yes, I live in the Heights and rent my home	3.79%	5
No, but I used to live in the Heights	2.27%	3
No, but I would like to live in the Heights in the future	1.52%	2
I have never lived in the Heights and am unlikely to	2.27%	3
Other (please specify)	3.79%	5
TOTAL		132

Q22 Why do you live in the Heights? Or, why not?

Answered: 126 Skipped: 7

Q23 How long have you lived in the Heights area?

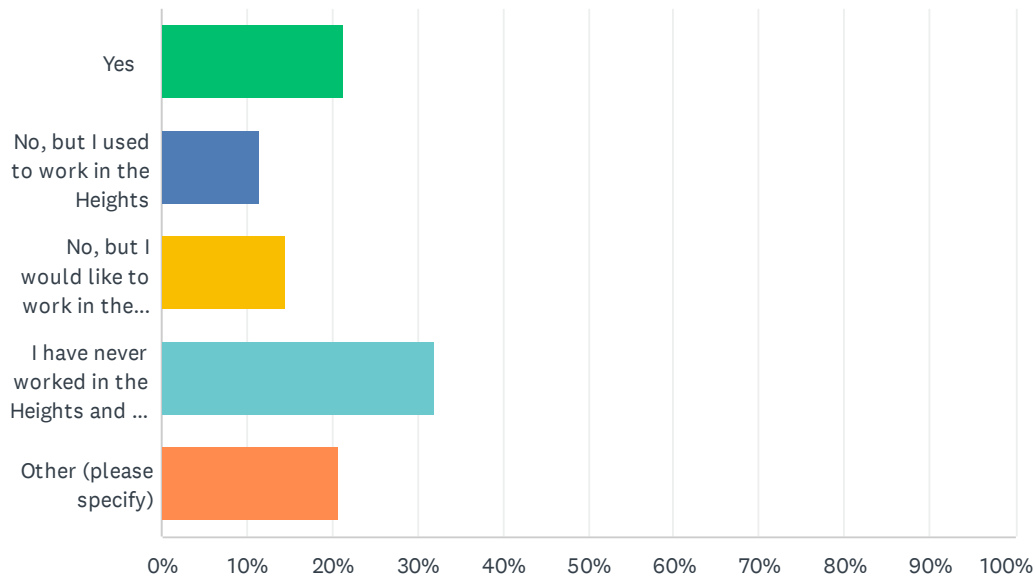
Answered: 132 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not live in the Heights	6.82%	9
Less than one year	0.76%	1
1 - 5 years	19.70%	26
6 - 10 years	10.61%	14
More than 10 years	62.12%	82
TOTAL		132

Q24 Do you work in the Heights?

Answered: 131 Skipped: 2



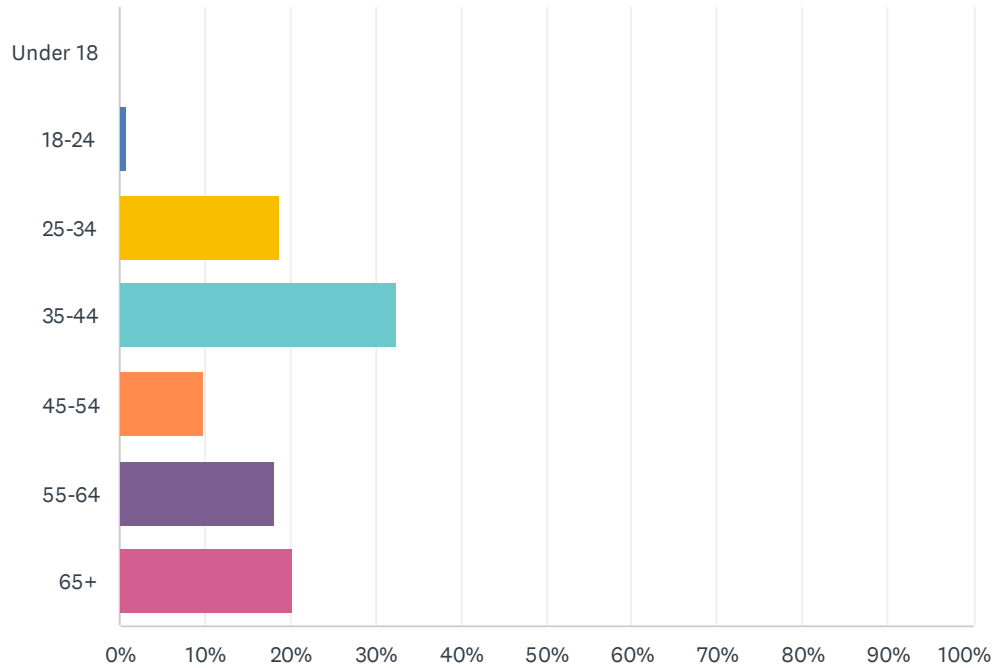
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.37%	28
No, but I used to work in the Heights	11.45%	15
No, but I would like to work in the Heights	14.50%	19
I have never worked in the Heights and am unlikely to	32.06%	42
Other (please specify)	20.61%	27
TOTAL		131

Q25 Why do you work in the Heights? Or, why not?

Answered: 118 Skipped: 15

Q26 What age group do you belong to?

Answered: 133 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	0.75%	1
25-34	18.80%	25
35-44	32.33%	43
45-54	9.77%	13
55-64	18.05%	24
65+	20.30%	27
TOTAL		133

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	1/28/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	7:00 pm
ORGANIZER:	Heights Task Force	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:	Heights Task Force Members	ORGANIZATION:	Heights Task Force

The DOWL team presented about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update to the Task Force.

Discussion from the group included:

Plan recommendations

- Request identifying commercial and light commercial development nodes.
- Provide recommendations for utilities and growth locations.
- Consider chopping up heights into neighborhoods for unique identification.
- Plan should be explicit. Identify locations for specific development.

Transportation

- Transportation Network has improved since the last plan.
- Access to businesses along Main Street is a problem. Consider creative ways to access from behind (Lake Elmo or Bench).

Economic development

- Some goods don't exist in the Heights, so consumers must leave the heights to get clothing, shoes, athletic gear, lumber.
- When out of the Heights to get goods, they stop to eat, etc. thus not patronizing heights establishments.
- More grocery store options needed in the Heights.
- Need more business centers. Business centers will lead to more commercial development and housing.
- Keep people in Heights with business centers.
- Need unique destinations to attract residents and visitors; time to play offense.

Purpose

- Best plans are specific plans. Specific plans are controversial.
- Plan will be a tool for community leaders to aid in decision-making.

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/10/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	9:00 am
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Emily Tyler		Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks	
Scott Reiter		Director of Facilities, Billings Public Schools	
Carolyn Sevier		Yellowstone River and Parks Association (YRPA)	
Megan McLean		DOWL	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	

The DOWL team presented about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update to representatives of agencies that oversee parks and public facilities in the Heights and collected feedback.

Discussion from the group included:

- Overview of Plan purpose/focus areas
- New developments/changes since the 2006 Plan was adopted
- Challenges and opportunities for future growth/development

Schools and Public Facilities:

- **Castlerock**
 - Challenges:
 - Traffic congestion on Governor's Blvd. between Castlerock Middle School and Skyview High School especially during pick-up/drop-off hours.
 - Current Plans/Projects since 2006:
 - Multi-use fields, paths, and a new parking lot were completed at Castlerock Park in the last five years.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Add arrows to the traffic signals on Governors Blvd. to improve traffic flow.
 - School owns narrow strip of land west of Governors Blvd.; there are plans to use this for staff housing, parking, etc. DNRC owns the larger chunk of land west of this strip, which is full of prairie dogs, cacti, etc.
- **Beartooth Elementary, Bitterroot Elementary, and Medicine Crow Middle School**
 - Challenges:
 - Limited pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods and the schools. Students walk/bike in the shoulder where there are sidewalk gaps.
 - Pedestrian/bicyclist connectivity issues between Bitterroot and Medicine Crow especially.
 - No sidewalk from Medicine Crow to Barrett Lane or from the trail off Khyll Lane to Wicks.
 - Current/Recent/Future Projects:

- Developed green space with irrigation behind Beartooth Elementary for sports and recreation.
- Upgraded two fields at Medicine Crow and added a football field, which get used a lot outside of school hours.
- **Independent School**
 - Challenges:
 - Pickup/drop-off and pedestrian safety issues due to the school being located along a highway with limited connectivity to surrounding parks and neighborhoods.
- **Skyview**
 - Challenges:
 - Parking and irrigation continue to be a challenge. Watering Skyview fields with city water costs about \$20,000-\$25,000 per month during the warmer months.
 - Sanbell consulted on the irrigation issue at one point and due to the absence of well water, their recommendations focused on alternate/drought-resistant landscaping.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Look into astroturf, gravel mixture, or other drought-resistant options for landscaping to reduce watering costs.
 - Potential for spring water to be funneled to Skyview into an irrigation pond irrigation pond.
- **Career Center**
 - Challenges:
 - Not accessible for Skyview students due to distance.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Skyway Drive (Inner Belt Loop) could help more students access the career center if buses can take Zimmerman Trail.

State Parks:

- **Lake Elmo**
 - Challenges:
 - Vandalism (i.e. graffiti/property damage in public restrooms, broken glass/trash in parking lots) and littering.
 - Pedestrian safety. Lake Elmo Drive residents organized an action to reduce the speed limit on Lake Elmo Drive from 35 to 25 mph in recent years, but it was unsuccessful.
 - There's currently no sidewalk along the east side of Lake Elmo, or a designated trail/bridge for people from the eastside neighborhoods to use to cross the irrigation canal and access the park. People often use the maintenance/authorized-use only trail west of the canal to walk, bike, etc. but the path is not officially designated for those purposes.
 - Lack of shade structure limits summer camp groups' length of visit.
 - Limited staff/volunteers to manage needed improvements to Lake Elmo.
 - Current Plans/Projects:
 - Emily Tyler, with FWP, is working with local mural artist to paint a mural at Lake Elmo.
 - Plans to update the Lake Elmo master plan which was last updated around 2005. Current plan includes parking lot expansion.
 - Plans are in process to expand the dog park around Lake Elmo.

- Aspirational future projects:
 - Facility for paddle board/kayak rental concessionaire.
 - Small store for snacks, water, sunscreen, etc. to increase comfortability and motivate people to recreate longer.
 - Add shade structures.
- Recommendations / Opportunities:
 - Improved signage (i.e. wayfinding signs, pedestrian crossing, etc.). FWP plans to standardize and overhaul wayfinding signs statewide in the future.
 - More lighting to deter criminal activity and parking lot parties after-hours.
 - Additional connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists especially from Lake Elmo Drive (south of Lake Elmo) to the west side of the lake.
 - Add a bus stop on Lake Elmo Drive.
- **Dover Park/YRPA:**
 - Challenges:
 - With the Yellowstone River bridge opening (via MDT's Billings Bypass project), Dover Park may see an increase in homeless encampments.
 - Current Plans/Projects:
 - YRPA is helping Pioneer School develop a small section of land east of the school into a multi-use field. Timeline depends on completion of gravel pit reclamation.
 - Within 4-5 years, Dover Park is expected to be more fully developed.
 - Master plan recently updated to include expanded footprint.
 - Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Potential to provide activity/recreation space for Heights-based summer camp. There are only one or two summer camps offered through the City of Billings that are located/based in the Heights. Parks must have a public restroom and designated shelter to be approved for City of Billings summer camps and recreation.

Billings Parks & Recreation: (virtual meeting with Mike Pigg, director of Billings Parks on Wednesday, February 12)

- Mike is retiring in March 2025.
- Changes/improvements since 2006 Heights Plan:
 - A picnic structure was added to Castlerock Park. This is not a three-season structure as originally planned but if a community center is built in the future that could fulfill the need of a three-season shelter.
 - Signage plan for trails have been semi-implemented – it continues to evolve as the Heritage Trail system continues being developed.
 - Added playground, tennis courts, and parking area to Castlerock Park.
 - The Parks department has implemented strategies for using water more efficiently such as installing centralized control systems, recycling water, more efficient irrigation techniques, etc.
- Challenges/Voids:
 - Funding is a big challenge. Community surveys/outreach consistently show support for parks and community facilities but when voters are asked to support initiatives that would require them to pay for those facilities through taxes/levies/bonds/etc., they overwhelmingly vote against them. Billings residents don't typically vote for initiatives that exclusively benefit another area of town

without some sort of added value to their neighborhood, making it difficult to scale down those initiatives so they are more digestible.

- Bond failed that would have helped build a community center for the Heights, so there's no current plan for a community center. Would like to continue plans for community center if a funding source can be secured.
- Castlerock Park was developed using LWCF funds, so a community center would likely need to be developed on other land due to funding complexities (i.e. along Skyway Drive/Inner Belt Loop).
- No pickleball courts in the heights – players can divide the tennis courts at Castlerock Park, but they must bring their own nets.
- Dog parks are overcrowded.
- When a bond was proposed in the early 2000s to replace Cobb Field with Dehler Park (which would result in the closure of Athletic Swimming Pool), it initially included a swimming pool in the Heights but the bond failed. When the pool was removed, the bond passed. While Oasis Water Park has been a big improvement, many Heights residents still support a community-owned swimming pool.
- There's currently no protective structure at the Heights parks, preventing summer camps from originating in the Heights. There must be a shelter to protect kids from inclement weather while parents are working, etc. Schools aren't very accessible for this purpose during the summer due to deep cleaning and renovation projects that can't take place during the school year.
- Private developers are required to give either 11% of the land they purchase or 11% of its value to the city upon acquisition but there is no plan requirement for future development and often no available funding which results in neighborhood park space becoming neglected.
- Park maintenance and landscaping. Not many people support xeriscaping at community parks because they want to recreate / gather in areas with mowed and irrigated grass, etc.
- Recommendations/Opportunities:
 - Community center (with an aquatic feature such as a swimming pool), sports complex, and more park space along Skyway Drive. This may also attract people from other areas of town such as the west end.
 - Proactively acquire land in areas of predicted growth while property values are lower in anticipation of future park and neighborhood development.
 - Safety:
 - Biggest focus around pedestrian safety moving forward should be on lighting upgrades using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
 - Currently seeking funding to add lighting to Castlerock Park. The next biggest need is to add lighting along "Safe Routes to School" routes and in parking lots and other areas where people are gathering when it's dark.
 - Wayfinding sign on trails more important.
 - Continue developing and adding trail connections through the Heritage Trail Plan.
 - Adding a community park (like Castlerock) to the east side of Main Street.
 - When the city inherits 11% of land acquired by developers, it should include long-term development and funding plans.
 - Public engagement:

- When asking citizens if they support parks/community facility initiatives, ask if they would be willing to help fund them. If the answer is no, ask what information they would need to support those initiatives and explain the importance/benefit/value to the community.
- Educate the community about SID/PMD (some city leaders are in favor of selling undeveloped parkland to developers if neighborhoods don't start
 - Add a city maintenance facility in heights so Parks staff could stay in the heights and originate work from there.
 - Find ways to bring people from other areas of town to the Heights in addition to focusing on ways to keep Heights residents in the Heights. Perhaps add more amenities to the Heights parks.

General Plan Recommendations:

- Improved coordination between the Heights and Lockwood (i.e. bring together city/county leaders in those areas to identify challenges and opportunities that impact both areas).
- Improved coordination between state parks and city parks departments (i.e. local FWP and City of Billings)
- Better signage on bike/pedestrian trails showing users how to connect to next segment/roadway/etc.
- Opportunity for increased connectivity between Lake Elmo and Dover Park (about 2 miles), or a marketing campaign (i.e. "Heights Greenway") to increase visibility for the two parks and their proximity to one another.
- Improved connectivity between Independent School and neighboring parks and neighborhoods. It is currently located on a highway which creates pedestrian safety and pick-up/drop-off issues.
- Additional bicycle/pedestrian connectivity from Kiwanis Trail to the new roadway running parallel to Mary Street (construction of this roadway is TBD due to Billings Bypass project).
- Include an action item in the Heights Plan for funding long-term park maintenance and development.
- Include an action item to coordinate with FWP as they update the Lake Elmo Master plan.
- Focus on improvements in the Heights that are equitable with downtown and the west end (i.e. improving dog parks, adding amenities, and building facilities/programs that build community pride and are of the same caliber/quality as west end improvements).
- Maintain smaller neighborhood parks in the Heights to provide residents/kids with green space and park amenities that are close to their homes, so they don't have to travel far to access the large parks.
- Include a public engagement initiative that focuses on activating the Heights community. This could include placemaking principles to explore ways to mobilize individual neighborhoods.
- The Billings Bypass presents an opportunity for an aesthetic Heights entryway. Once the bypass opens, the Heights might be first place people see when they enter Billings. Coordinate with YRPA on "Welcome to Billings" signage. Signage at entryway could also direct people to Lake Elmo and other Heights attractions.

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/14/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Dianne Lehm		Big Sky EDA	
Cathy Grider		Billings Chamber of Commerce	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	
Megan McLean		DOWL	

The DOWL team presented about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update to representatives from Big Sky Economic Development Association (Big Sky EDA) and Billings Chamber of Commerce and collected feedback from an economic and tourism perspective.

Discussion from the group included:

- Overview of Plan purpose/focus areas
 - Land Use/Development
 - Community/Public Facilities
 - Transportation/Connectivity
- New developments/changes since the 2006 Plan was adopted
- Challenges and opportunities for future growth/development

Chamber of Commerce:

- Recent / Past Efforts:
 - Chamber has current focus on hosting after-hours events at Heights businesses and hopes to establish a Heights business networking group.
 - Would like to increase Chamber membership to include more Heights businesses. Heights area businesses have the lowest Chamber membership of any other area of Billings but have expressed interest in Chamber services.
 - Chamber is predominantly member-funded.
- Challenges:
 - Ice hockey will be moving to the new sports complex at Amend Park soon, removing another incentive for people to spend money in the Heights.
- Recommendations / Opportunities:
 - Grow Heights membership with the Billing Chamber of Commerce.
 - Start a Heights business round table (perhaps quarterly at a place like Pizza Ranch) to bring new members into the fold, highlight the value of Chamber membership, and discuss challenges and opportunities for Heights businesses.
 - Find ways to collaborate with and revamp Heights Business Association, which isn't currently meeting.
 - Provide Heights specific networking opportunities.
 - Skyway Drive good be a good spot to develop a resort-style hotel (i.e. Sage Lodge, etc.).

Big Sky Economic Development:

- Challenges:
 - Barrett Road (county) is not maintained, weird pockets of county that aren't maintained.
 - Higher cost to develop within the Heights water district.
 - The Heights doesn't have a town center with walkable shopping etc.
 - Out of state businesses typically look at developing along I-90 corridor where infrastructure exists and is reliable.
 - TDS fiber installation is in progress in the Heights but taking longer than anticipated due to geotechnical issues (i.e. ground is more rock than soil, etc.).

- Recommendations / Opportunities:
 - There are opportunities to create attractions unique to the Heights (i.e. Peaks to Prairie; some sort of outdoor event and/or markets centered around certain neighborhoods such as the area from Lake Elmo to Dover Park to get people away from Main Street)
 - Lockwood Industrial Complex would be a good place to develop (i.e. good location for data centers or something similar that would add to the local tax base while also creating jobs – would like to see fewer storage units in this area as they don't create many jobs or contribute as much to the local economy)
 - Opportunity to create a commercial node with a neighborhood shopping area on the north side of the Yellowstone River bridge once bypass opens (i.e. restaurants, convenience store, coffee shop, etc.)
 - Development opportunities in the green space northwest of Highway 212.
 - “Dark fiber” – Fiber is installed along I-90 but it's not yet accessible. If the city/county can tap into fiber, it may change the development potential of those areas.
 - There are a lot of vacant commercial spaces in the Heights with no sale sign (i.e. Stadium Club) that have become a public safety issue. Still need to inventory those spaces and develop a marketing brochure for businesses looking for locations. Engagement with landowners about future plans is needed.
 - Having an anchor event in the Heights could bring people from other areas of town to the Heights (i.e. art fair/market around Lake Elmo or Castlerock Park, a weekday farmer's market, Peaks to Prairie, etc.).
 - Define the Heights neighborhood with gateway signage to give the community pride and ownership. (This could be an action item assigned to Heights Task Force and City/County Planning).
 - Building a base of volunteers and promoting community involvement could be beneficial for the Heights Task Force (more collaboration and inclusion).



ECONOMIC IMPACT

ECONOMIC PULSE

BUSINESS ADVISING & LENDING • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT • NEW BUSINESS RECRUITMENT • WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

BILLINGS HEIGHTS

33,494 REASONS TO INVEST IN A TREASURE FOR FAMILY, RECREATION, AND BUSINESS

Billings Heights is a family-oriented, suburban section of Montana's largest city that has major opportunities for increased business investment and amenities.



THE HEIGHTS BY THE NUMBERS

- **Total Population:** 33,494 (2024)
- **Population Density:** 349.39 people per square mile (considered spacious living compared to traditional urban centers)
- **Median Age:** 36.6 years
- **Gender Distribution**
 - ▶ **Male:** 51.9%
 - ▶ **Female:** 48.1%

Source: Economic Overview Report, JobsEQ, 2025



COMMUTE & TRANSPORTATION

- **Average Commute Time:** 19.9 minutes
- **Transportation Highlights:**
 - ▶ **Skyway Drive (Inner Belt Loop)** is a key 7-mile direct connector between the Heights and the West End. This connectivity can reduce trips to Billings West End or Downtown by as much as 10 minutes or more and allows another route to the area besides Montana's busiest roadways - 4th and 6th Ave. - and Main St.
 - ▶ **Billings Logan International Airport** is a short commute taking Billings Heights residents and business professionals to 10 direct flight destinations daily.
 - ▶ **Billings Bypass Project** - Six-phase road project connecting I-90 (Lockwood) to US-87 (Billings Heights). The Yellowstone River Bridge is complete, the Railroad Overpass to open by July 2025, full completion by 2028.

Source: Billings Bypass Project, Montana Department of Transportation, 2024

- **Public Transit Connectivity**
 - ▶ **Billings Heights residents are served by three MET transit routes** - Heights to Downtown, East Heights, and West Heights offering 450+ weekly trips to connect residents across our community. Although public transit connectivity is strong, only 0.4% of Heights residents utilize public transit.

Source: Fixed-Route Service Map, City of Billings MET Transit, 2024

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$74,572

State: \$69,922
National: \$80,610

MEDIAN HOME VALUE

\$314,900

State: \$495,100
National: \$419,200

HOUSING AVAILABILITY

- **Total Housing Units:** 14,198
- With **36%** of households in Billings Heights having children, the area stands out as one of the most family-oriented corners of our city—offering a strong sense of community, excellent schools, and amenities designed for growing families.
- **Rental Vacancy Rate:** 3.2% (demand for housing is greater than supply)
- **Homeowner Vacancy Rate:** 0.2% (demand for housing is greater than supply)
- **Owner-Occupied Housing:** Billings Heights: 76.6%
Yellowstone County: 69.5% > State: 68.1%
- **Renter-Occupied Housing:** Billings Heights: 23.4%
Yellowstone County: 30.5% > State: 31.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025

HIGH END RESIDENTIAL ON THE HORIZON

- **The Timbers:** A sought-after Heights community blending contemporary homes, walkable parks, and top-rated schools—perfect for active families and professionals.
- **Bitterroot Heights:** A serene, well-established neighborhood offering spacious lots, mature landscaping, and a welcoming, close-knit feel.
- **Bar 11:** An exclusive enclave of custom-built homes perched with stunning Rim views, where luxury meets the quiet charm of the Heights.

Source: The Real Estate Collective, 2024

CRIME RATES IN BILLINGS HEIGHTS CONSISTENTLY LOWER THAN BOTH STATE AND NATIONAL AVERAGES

Location	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Total Crime
Billings Heights	3.4	11.7	22.1
Montana (State Avg.)	4.9	18.3	23.2
United States (Avg.)	3.8	19.1	22.9

Source: Monthly Task Force Reports, Billings Police Department, 2025, Crime Maps and Statistics, CrimeGrade, 2025

- **Billings Heights Crime Trends Compared to Other Billings Neighborhoods (Monthly)**
 - ▶ **Lower burglary rates** than South Side (12), Midtown (9), and West End (8).
 - ▶ **Fewer violent crimes** than in the South Side (15 assaults per month).
 - ▶ **Drug-related crime is lower** than South Side (10) and Midtown (6).
 - ▶ **Highest DUI rate in Billings** (12 per month, above all neighborhoods)



These trends reinforce Billings Heights' reputation as a secure, investment-ready district ideal for commercial growth and family-oriented amenities.

Continued on back

PUBLIC SAFETY TRENDS

LIVE / WORK / PLAY

RECREATION, AMENITIES, AND ENTERTAINMENT

- **Lake Elmo State Park** (183 acres, year-round recreation)
- **Castle Rock Park** (scenic & ideal for outdoor activities)
- **Two Moons Park & Dover Park** (picnic & leisure spaces)
- **Dog Parks & Walking Trails** (pet-friendly community)
- **Oasis, Hawthorne Park & Castle Rock Park** (water park & wading/spray pool)
- **Lake Hills Golf Course**
- **High Sierra Park** (disc golf course, dog park, natural area, and athletic field)
- **Skyway Drive Trail** (a 5-mile trail running along the newly opened Skyway Drive)
- **Skyline Trail** (a 7-mile trail connecting Swords Park and Zimmerman Park)
- **First Interstate Bank Arena** (Yellowstone County venue providing entertainment, events, and state-wide hub for high school activities that offers plenty of opportunities for restaurants, hotels, and other amenities nearby for attendees from across the region).



Sources: Billings Trail Net, 2025; Billings Celebrates Opening of Inner Belt Loop/Skyway Drive Connecting Heights and West End, KTVQ News, 2024.

33,494 REASONS TO INVEST IN THE BILLINGS HEIGHTS:

The Billings Heights is the population equivalent of Kalispell (31,540) or Helena (32,529), respectively. Residents have historically been expected to commute to Billings Downtown or West End for services that could very well be saturated and supported by the existing population alone, in addition to creating destination-based experiences that would attract other neighborhoods to the Billings Heights.

Opportunities for new business investment and amenities in the Billings Heights:

- **Skyview High School and surrounding neighborhoods:**
 - **1,600 students**, a growing network of residential neighborhoods, and new connectivity via Skyway Drive make for a perfect location for food and drink kiosks, restaurants, and other amenities to serve students, staff, and residents alike.
- **Skyway Drive**
 - This **scenic thoroughfare** provides opportunities for new business investment to add vibrancy and destinations for vehicles and recreation enthusiasts traveling the 7-mile connector by car, bike, and foot.
- **Wicks, Bench, Hilltop and other neighborhood routes**
 - Experiences like neighborhood shops, boutique professional services, walk-in or kiosk-style food and drink and more would add vibrancy to these densely residential neighborhoods.
 - **New Business Highlight:** 105 Coffee and Brewing, founded by Heights-native Travis Zeilstra, offering events, a food-truck hub, and indoor/outdoor seating is now open at 815 Yellowstone River Road.
- **Main Street**
 - Connected to two of the busiest roadways in Montana – 4th and 6th Ave – Main Street continues to be a busy route at almost **39,000 trips a day**. Opportunities for larger retail, warehouse clubs, household recognizable brands, car dealerships, and locally owned fare would catch the eye of daily commuters.

Statistical Atlas of the United States, 2025

A “LAST BEST PLACE” FOR MONTANA’S FAMILIES

BILLINGS HEIGHTS: WALKABILITY & PARKLAND SNAPSHOT

Metric	Value	Interpretation
Homes within 0.5 miles of a K-12 school	3,392 homes	24.3% of all homes – just under 1 in 4
Homes within 0.5 miles of a park/recreation area	4,524 homes	32.4% of all homes – slightly over 1 in 3
Total parkland and natural areas	293 acres	3.1% of Billings Heights’ total land area

Source: Yellowstone County GIS Mapping Portal, 2025

COMMERCIAL SPACES READY FOR ACTIVATION

- **Total Office Space Inventory in Billings Heights:**

44,845 sq ft

Whether it’s service-based businesses, community clinics, destination dining, or professional offices, this inventory provides a turnkey opportunity for entrepreneurs and investors.

Note: These figures are estimates based on publicly available listings and do not reflect current vacancies. They provide a general snapshot of commercial space in Billings Heights (59105).

Source: Montana Site Selector Market Profile Report, 2025; Multiple Listing Service (MLS), 2025; Commercial Real Estate Exchange Incorporated (CREXI), 2025.

INDUSTRY VOID ANALYSIS

- **Sectors with High Location Quotients (LQ) - Strong Industry Presence:**

- **Transportation & Warehousing: LQ = 1.99**
- **Real Estate & Leasing: LQ = 1.83**
- **Accommodation & Food Services: LQ = 1.76**



- **Industries with Opportunity Gaps - Underrepresented Sectors Needing Growth:**

- **Healthcare & Social Assistance: LQ = 0.54**
- **Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services: LQ = 0.54**
- **Information Technology: LQ = 0.08** (highly underrepresented)

Source: National Multi-Family Housing Council 2025

LABOR FORCE & WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

- **Labor Force Participation Rate: 66.5%** - The percentage of all working-age individuals (16+) who are employed or actively seeking work. (Includes retirees, students, and those not in the workforce, which lowers the rate.)
- **Prime-Age Workforce (25-54 years): 88.1%** - Measures participation among individuals in their peak working years, where employment is more common. (This rate is higher than state (83.4%) and national average (82.1%))

Source: Montana Site Selector Market Profile Report, 2025



HIGHEST-EARNING INDUSTRIES

- **Mining, Quarrying, & Oil Extraction: \$116,335** avg. annual wage (highest-paying industry, though workforce size is lower)
- **Management of Companies: \$94,755** avg. annual wage (high-skill, executive-level employment sector)
- **Wholesale Trade: \$86,620** avg. annual wage (supports business-to-business sales, logistics, and distribution)

Source: Montana Site Selector Market Profile Report, 2025



PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/25/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	11:30 am
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Elyse Monat		Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); BPAC	
Anna O'Donnel		YMCA; BPAC	
Jason Wood		BPAC	
Dave Coppock		BPAC	
Kristy Halderman		BPAC	
Stephanie Donovan		A&E; BPAC	
Megan McLean		DOWL	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	

The DOWL team attended the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee's (BPAC) monthly meeting on February 25 to share an update on the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update and collect feedback from a non-motorized transportation perspective.

Key Takeaways

- Challenges:
 - Perceived lack of support from Heights leadership for sidewalks.
 - Pedestrian connectivity and safety are often considered reactively, after the public is engaged in certain transportation or development projects. Would like to see more forethought as the Heights continues to grow.
 - Noted bicycle crashes on Lake Elmo Drive.
 - Discussed difficulty crossing Main Street.
- Updates since 2006:
 - Safe Routes to School was updated in 2022.
 - Heritage Trail Plain was superseded by the Billings Active Transportation Plan.
 - Facilities listed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan must be incorporated into new subdivision development plans (only applies to developments in city limits).
 - Kiwanis Trail has been good for keeping kids off the roadway when traveling to/from school and home.
 - New cul-de-sacs within city limits must connect with a pedestrian facility per updated regulations.
- Opportunities/Recommendations:
 - More bike/ped connections away from busy corridors while still offering connectivity (i.e. perhaps more diversions connecting busy corridors to adjacent neighborhood paths or trails).

MEETING SUMMARY

- The Heights has some unique views of Billings and the Yellowstone River. There is opportunity to promote/amplify that. (i.e. when coming down Bench toward Main Street, you see Two Moon Park/Yellowstone River and Four Dances Recreation Area on the left and the rimrocks straight ahead.) Would like to see those unique views protected with future growth/development.
- Would like to see gateway feature welcoming people to Billings in the north side of the Yellowstone River bridge once it opens.
- There seems to be increasing interest among Billings residents to bring back neighborhood businesses (i.e. Harper & Madison, Poly Food Basket, etc.).

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	5/1/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	10:00 am
ORGANIZER:	EMS/First Responders	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Jamie Fender		Billings Fire Department (BFD)	
Eric Schnelbach		Billings Police Department (BPD)	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	
Megan McLean		DOWL	

The DOWL team presented to representatives from the Billings Fire and Police Departments about the Heights Neighborhood Plan Update and asked for input from the law enforcement/first responder perspective.

Improvements since 2006:

- New fire station on Lake Elmo/Hilltop

Current/Existing Culture:

- More calls on Main Street and Lake Elmo due to commercial businesses (i.e. theft) and multi-unit housing issues (i.e. apartments or trailers on Lake Elmo)
- Calls predominantly include crashes on Main Street and medical
- If a 911 call is for violent offense or injuries, BFD, AMR, and BPD all go. BFD stages until BPD clears scene.

Challenges:

- Traffic congestion around the Metra. Trucks aren't currently running out of the new station so if backup is required, trucks have to come from Station 1 (8th Ave N) which results in long response time.
- Water supply
 - Dry fire hydrants in the Heights – one on Three Bars Trail. In order to develop subdivision, developer had to install a dry hydrant hookup.
- Transient population growing in the Heights particularly around Main St.
- No designated fire lanes in Billings (Albertson's in the Heights added one to parking lot).
- Congestion at Metra is a challenge. Have two patrol cars in the Heights. Would like to have a satellite office (sub-station) in the Heights for the convenience of officers.
- If streets are too narrow (20-26 feet) and sidewalks protrude (bulbouts), it can cause access issues for fire trucks and traffic as they usually have to close the street. BFD prefers 34-foot-wide streets with designated fire lane. Understand the need to balance pedestrian comfort/safety with access for first responders.
- Development planned for Alkali creek south of intersection with Skyway Drive. Recent flash flooding prevented access into subdivision – important to have two access points.
- BUFSA (Billings Urban Fire Safety Area), provide support for BFD but need access to water. Outside city limits, need a water supply to develop.

MEETING SUMMARY

- Failed safety levy (2024) would have allocated two new School Resource Officers (SROs) at two Heights middle schools.

Miscellaneous:

- Main Street has a perception of “blight.” In order to attract people to the Heights, it will need a big beautification effort.
- Development planned between Rehberg Ranch and Skyway Drive
- New developments must add 10% to estimated water usage calculations to accommodate for fire safety and potential issues.

Recommendations:

- Would like to see Stations 10 and 11 on west and east side of Heights. The next fire station will be likely be on the west end, off Hesper. Stations 10 and 11 would be long-term plans ~15 years in the future.
- Sub-station (where BPD can dispatch out of an existing BFD station) would be useful in the Heights so that Heights patrol has a “landing zone” without having to go home or to downtown headquarters.

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	6/5/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	11:00 AM – 12:15 PM
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	
Megan McLean		DOWL	
Sydney Pfeaster		DOWL	
Lora Mattox		Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	
Kassi Strong		Strong Marketing & Strategy	
Cody Strong		Strong Marketing & Strategy	
Ming Cabrera		Ming Properties	
Jeff Essman		Ess-Tech LLC	
Kari Jones		Kari Jones – State Farm	
Shelli Mann		Boothill Inn	
Dennis Benson		Warden's Casino	
Josh Benson		Warden's Casino	
Brandon Fleury		105 Brewing	
Jennifer Owens		Billings City Council	

The DOWL team updated a group of Heights business owners about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan and collected feedback from the business owner / Heights resident perspective.

Challenges:

- Fiber optic infrastructure continues to be a challenge — TDS is running into geotechnical issues causing delays in fiber installation.
- Water rates and water access have dissuaded businesses from moving into the Heights.
- Centennial Ice Arena is often at capacity or booked. It can be difficult to take kids skating. Note: Signal Peak is slated to put resources into Centennial for upkeep once the new ice arena in South Billings is complete.
- Federal economic climate has caused reluctance from large “anchor” retailers to establish business in existing buildings along Main Street, though it’s likely they will come back to the table as the economic climate settles.
- The Heights was established as a county subdivision – after annexation into the city, some of the infrastructure common in the county (i.e. gravel roads, lack of stormwater infrastructure, etc.) was never updated to city standards.
- City/county regulations regarding business permitting present challenges and can dissuade small businesses from moving forward due to unexpected expenses (i.e. when

going through the permitting process, one restaurateur's permit triggered a requirement to retrofit fire sprinklers with fire lights which were going to be too expensive.)

- Zoning in the Heights continues to be a challenge for businesses particularly between Wicks and Pemberton.
 - One attendee described the zoning as being “too parcelized.”
- Families and “weekend warriors” often spend their weekends in areas of Billings where they can accomplish multiple objectives (i.e. errands, shopping, entertainment, eating, recreation, etc.) so residents often leave the Heights and spend a whole day on the west end.
- Businesses who thrive on weekend traffic struggle to survive during the week.

Recommendations/Opportunities:

- Would like to see more unique opportunities that motivate people — from all areas of Billings — to spend time in the Heights on weekends and weekdays (i.e. Oasis Water Park, etc.).
- There's an opportunity to establish a TIF district along Main Street starting at Wicks and extending northeast toward Dover Park, past the Bitterroot housing development.
 - Discussions have been ongoing for several years.
 - Now is the time to mobilize residents and businesses to gain support for and take action toward establishing a TIF district, before property values increase because of the Billings Bypass and corresponding development in the northeast Heights.
- There's also opportunity to establish a Heights business improvement district (BID).
- Potentially create a social media landing page for the Heights to create more visibility for what the Heights has to offer and build community.
 - Kassi owns the @billingsheights Instagram handle.
- There is a need for networking and other opportunities for Heights businesses to cultivate connectivity, partnership, and togetherness.
 - Heights Business Association has been dormant due to COVID but has funds available. There is opportunity to educate the community about the Heights Business Association and pass the baton to new leadership.
 - There are other networking groups in Billings — perhaps there's an opportunity to loop Heights businesses into existing networks (i.e. Biz to Biz, Trailhead to Trailhead, etc.).
 - The Billings Chamber of Commerce is building a Heights networking group, but membership of the Chamber would be a requirement for participation.
- Would like to see smaller scale commercial nodes off Main Street so people can support businesses while staying close to their homes/neighborhoods.

General Comments:

- The Heights Neighborhood Plan boundary should include the airport and Rehberg Ranch since school-aged children in that subdivision go to school in the Heights. The Heights is a “poster child for urban renewal” (i.e. inadequate right of ways, unpaved streets, missing storm drains).
- Roxy Lane struggles with stormwater drainage issues. Would like to see the city pave and update the road and add curb and gutter for improved drainage.

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	10/21/2025
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	2:00 PM
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	
Megan McLean		DOWL	
Tate Johnson		Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	
Jeff Essmann		Chair, County Water District of the Billings Heights	

The DOWL and project team met with Jeff Essmann, current chair of the County Water District of the Billings Heights about the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan to collect feedback from the District's perspective.

Challenges:

- Access to water has largely been resolved
- Issues within district to get proper looping of system led to stagnant water situations or operational problems (i.e. if there's a break and it's at the end of a line, a lot of users couldn't access water)
- Some water lines are too small in diameter (need to upgrade from 6" to 8" for better flow/pressure)
- Low pressure problem in Lake Hills subdivision
- Water District has been a barrier to economic development in the Heights
- Very expensive to run transmission lines

Recommendations/Opportunities:

- Study is ongoing to understand what consolidation with city would look like (district board open to consolidation to save customers money, etc.)
 - The board may consider putting consolidation out for district customers to vote on
- Study is supposed to be finalized in January—if this timeline can align with the Heights Plan update, that would be ideal. The district will be in a better position to make recommendations at that point.
- Seeing 1% growth in water meters annually
- Billings Bypass will be completed in the coming years—the development on the north end of the Heights should allow for denser development and will need water/sewer access.
- Dense development with municipal water and sewer in vicinity of Bypass would foster better more dense development and could serve as a catalyst project for an Urban Renewal District to provide upgrades to deficient water, sewer, stormwater, and street infrastructure in the older portions of the Heights

General Comments:

- Would like to see if the Heights become Urban Renewal District to help improve gaps in infrastructure

PROJECT:	Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan Update	DATE:	2/6/2026
PROJECT NUMBER:	4071.22009.01	TIME:	10:00 am
ORGANIZER:	DOWL	SUBJECT:	Stakeholder Engagement
ATTENDEES:		ORGANIZATION:	
Megan McLean		DOWL	
Lisa Olmsted		DOWL	
Sarah Plath		Billings Public Works	
Lora Mattox		Billings-Yellowstone County MPO	

Progress since 2006 Plan:

- Safe Routes to School has made some progress (“chipping away”)
- Annual “missing sidewalks” program - typically focus on locations where there’s also an opportunity to fulfill a Safe Routes to School project
- Street lighting:
 - Now required per city code that new residential developments must have street lighting
 - No code/requirement for added street lighting in infill developments
- Billings Public Works (BPW) looks at annual programs and identifies biggest needs across the City. Heights projects currently on the radar include pavement preservation/storm drain projects.
- There have been studies looking at drainage in the Heights. They’re mostly focused on the west Heights, around Skyview.
- TDS and Ziplly are both working to expand service into the Heights, but not all areas are currently served.
- Billings does not currently have any signal related projects planned for the heights, but have annual funding in the CIP that is prioritized based on need for signal improvements and signal timing coordination.

Challenges:

- Route connectivity
- Congestion
- Heights water discussion is evolving, no concrete direction at this point. A consultant is looking at whether it makes sense to merge with City.
- Survey respondents who said the Heights does not have adequate sewer services are likely those who live in county pockets as there aren’t notable issues with city sewer services.

Recommendations/Opportunities:

- Refer to projects in Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – Wicks project planned for FY 27-28
- There is a list of potential future projects not in the City’s 5-year plan at the back of CIP. There are several Heights projects in that list.

MEETING SUMMARY

- “Data Dashboard” is a helpful resource and shows all LRTP projects ([Billings MPO LRTP Projects Dashboard](#))
- Non-motorized Transportation – update language from “Heritage Trail Plan” to 2016 Bike/Ped Master Plan. Potential to garner support for the updated Bike/Ped Master Plan (which didn’t get adopted in 2025 due to City/County pushback) since there’s been turnover on City Council.
- Planning for Skyway Drive water/sewer, doesn’t show up in CIP but included in the “future project list” at the back.
- Take advantage of Traffic Calming Program/mechanisms (more cost-efficient in neighborhood streets, rather than “collector streets”).
- Travel Corridor Coordination (traffic signal timing improvements fall under this program).