



Citizen Survey: Community Conversations

The good, the bad and the ugly...

What are you most proud of in our City?

What are you most concerned about in our City?

What are you most proud of in our City?

People and Safety:

- The people of Billings: kind, friendly, open, courteous, helpful, thoughtful, willing to help others and generous. ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- The sense of community our City possesses. ✓✓✓✓✓✓
- To see the change where the City embraces citizens to solve problems, rather than dictating.
- Community involvement. ✓✓✓✓
- Great place to raise a family – safe ✓✓ and friendly - the quality of life. ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- A family-oriented community.
- Everyone usually gets along with everyone else.
- Quality of life ✓✓✓ – neighbors ✓, events, environment, access to trails ✓✓ and parks. ✓✓✓
- Coming together to get things done, i.e. Not in Our Town ✓, Ballpark bond, K-12 mill levy, and Montana’s Trailhead. ✓✓
- Proud of the atmosphere of Billings, i.e. low crime and friendly neighborhoods. ✓✓
- The diversity of our City and the strength that gives us. ✓

What are you most proud of in our City?

Appearance:

- General appearance. ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Spectacular setting, geographically.
- It is a vibrant center in many areas.
- Learning, healthcare ✓ and transportation ✓ options.
- The amenities ✓ and facilities our City has available. ✓✓
- Fire, Police, Parks, Library, schools and college, arts and medical services. ✓✓✓
- The Rims. ✓✓
- The trees in Billings. ✓✓
- The river. ✓✓
- Improved appearance of the new developments on the west end.
- The commitment we have made to the care of our community downtown. ✓✓✓✓✓✓
- The position of Billings among the cities/towns in the state.
- The vitality of our community - we are economically dynamic. ✓✓
- Improving architecture.

What are you most proud of in our City?

City Government:

- Only City in Montana to follow impact fee laws.
- To see the change where City embraces citizens to solve problems, rather than dictating. ✓✓
- The people, Fire, Police, Parks, Library and healthcare.
- Parks, schools and colleges, arts, Library and medical services.
- The opportunities, such as these meetings, to provide input. ✓✓✓✓
- Safety: Fire and Police Departments, except for the litigation issues. ✓✓
- Great center for shopping and City services. ✓✓✓✓
- Access to political officials and City staff. ✓
- The City dump and garbage services. ✓✓
- Great City staff – hard working, etc. ✓✓✓✓✓✓
- Proud of the fact that Billings has had recent mayors who have supported the pledge to reduce our carbon footprint by supporting the US Mayor's pledge to meet and go beyond the Kyoto Protocol.

What are you most proud of in our City?

Growth, Planning and Jobs:

- Acceptance of new job opportunities through good planning, i.e. East & South TIFD & TIFI.
- To see the City embracing and planning for growth, i.e. the Innerbelt.
- Diverse economy allowing for stable growth, but keeping the small town atmosphere with city-like amenities and opportunities.
- Proud of the increased size of the City – population – and business growth.
- It is a vibrant center in many areas.
- The bike trails. ✓
- The rebuilding and maintaining downtown. ✓✓ ✓✓✓
- Revitalizing downtown area and refurbishing old buildings. ✓✓
- All the parks, trees and agricultural land mixed within the City limits. ✓✓✓
- New development toward the fairgrounds.
- New development.
- Sophisticated community without the detriment of a larger city.
- The size of our City – we have everything here and we're still a small City. ✓
- Most proud of the fact that Billings is the economic center of commerce and opportunities in Montana. ✓ We are truly leading the way, compared to other communities.

What are you most proud of in our City?

Miscellaneous:

- Success of small businesses.
- The financial assistance programs (social service) offered, i.e. HRDC.
- The progress Billings has made culturally, socially and the growth and promotion of the arts. ✓✓✓
- A variety of social events.
- Great center for shopping and city services. ✓✓
- Festivals, events..."we can throw a party!"
- The medical community and facilities and our cultural opportunities. ✓✓
- The cultural arena of Billings. ✓
- The livability and conveniences of a larger city in a smaller community. ✓
- The "magnet factor" or desire to live here – driven by the people, work ethic, etc. ✓
- The new bus station downtown ✓ and the bus system, in general. ✓
- Building the new baseball park. ✓✓
- Arts and education.
- The social services here. ✓
- That Billings has the most "LEED" buildings in Montana and beyond. Also, the leadership and excellence in Energy Design (green building).

What are you most concerned about in our City?

People and Safety:

- White supremacy. ✓
- Safety of our citizens at night.
- Safety issues/Crime. ✓✓✓✓✓
- Emergency response time for the south side.
- Disharmony among people.
- Worried that we will turn into a city that doesn't care about people.
- Closed minded – no desire to educate ourselves about how to improve.
- Drugs, gangs and noise.
- Drug problems with adults in the parks near where I live.
- Lack of teamwork and cooperation.
- The demographic shift toward an older population makes Billings a difficult place to raise children.
- The tendency to feel that new ideas are suspect, and no idea from outside of Montana has merit.
- Feel that Billings is very “classist.”

What are you most concerned about in our City?

People and Safety (continued):

- Loss of community, fragmentation and apathy. Requires strong, decisive leadership to combat. ✓
- Getting across the railroad tracks when walking.
- Need places for the kids to go instead of getting into trouble.
- We don't pull together – there are too many entrenched or disconnected entities with an attitude that does not show respect for diversity. ✓

What are you most concerned about in our City?

Appearance:

- The entrance to the City from the east bridge.
- AA and cultural opportunities.
- Parks disappearing.
- Downtown parking. ✓
- The safety hazard of diagonal parking.
- The appearance of the City on major entryways to town.
- Poor Library building as compared to the baseball field (but great staff).
- Planning & development – how our community works and the City's aesthetic appeal.
- Neglected areas of town that are lower income.
- Blighted areas, entry corridors aren't all that pretty, in fact, they're pretty ugly.
- Amend Park – completion of the center structure (the roof over the restrooms and concession area).
- How the City looks – it's silly that we have a women's prison next to the visitor's bureau.
- Concerned about the aesthetics of Billings, in general. ✓✓✓✓
- Billings used to be attractive, but now it has become dirty and dusty, with trash thrown everywhere and people don't care.

What are you most concerned about in our City?

City Government:

- We aren't able to support the amenities that we need and want. We push our City departments to provide more services and maintain infrastructure on the same or smaller budget. It is too difficult to keep the quality and safety of our services in that climate. What services are we going to lose? ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Budget shortfall. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Council believes there is an unlimited amount of money from taxpayers, ignoring that the base of home ownership are retired elderly or over 65.
- Relations among different agencies: City, County, State...
- Financial situation of the City – financial stability. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Fiscal/financial concerns. Budget. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Spending beyond our means.
- Property tax sustaining all community services. ✓ ✓
- Lawsuits /litigation. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Finances, taxes vs. expenditures. The need to come up with non-property tax income. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- City government not working cohesively /leadership and direction does not seem cohesive. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

What are you most concerned about in our City? City Government (continued):

- Lack of global vision.
- Planning for capital improvements.
- Time, money and maintenance.
- Poor Library building as compared to the baseball field (but great staff).
- Need money for public safety.
- That the City will get bogged down with inconsequential issues and be unable to act positively.
- Continually being sued by the Gazette over meetings, etc.
- Why did the City lobby against a legislative bill requiring open fiscal accounting when asked?
- Reducing our fine downtown Library to neighborhood libraries – reducing operating hours. I think this is part of a plan for “dumbing down” America.
- Loss of community, fragmentation and apathy. Requires strong, decisive leadership to combat. ✓
- Concerned that Council and staff have not been as aggressive as they could have been in promoting and implementing energy conservation.

What are you most concerned about in our City? City Government (continued):

- Low commitment by the policy body toward sustainable practices ✓✓ – i.e. recycling, LED lights, toxic waste roundup (once a year!?!?!).
- Concerned that the “devil is in the details” – we as a City with public servants are not a team. We must demonstrate credibility and reasons to trust.
- Public trust and public knowledge of budget and spending ✓, keeping up with economic growth.
- Communication/Public Relations with the citizens. ✓✓
- Out of control politics.
- Water rates are too high to keep our City green.
- Water rates.
- Honesty.

What are you most concerned about in our City?

Growth, Planning and Jobs:

- Not enough opportunity for youth.
- Job security and job advancement opportunity.
- Infill parks that are not developed.
- City is spending more money than it is taking in.
- A police force, judicial team and court system that is “too big for their britches.”
- Need of industry or better paying job opportunities.
- Urban sprawl ✓✓✓✓ ✓ and the way the City is being developed without City infill and strengthening the City center. ✓✓✓✓✓
- Expansion in west end not helping downtown. ✓
- The lack of land-use planning ✓✓✓ – the way Billings and the City have allowed sprawl through the valley, on the rims and south of the river – just poor development.
- Rapid growth westward involving traffic flow – over-extension of City services and planned “green areas” for new subdivisions on the scale of Pioneer Park.
- Growth policy and growth in general– are we ready? ✓✓

What are you most concerned about in our City?

Growth, Planning and Jobs (continued):

- Most people are struggling to make or maintain a livable wage. ✓✓✓
- Resistance to trails – walking or bike. ✓✓
- Resistance to “sharing the road” with walkers, runners and bicyclists. ✓✓
- On-going development and services, but resistance to taxes or other funding. ✓✓
- Planning and development: how our community works and the City’s aesthetic appeal.
- The aging population and the impact on housing, services, etc.
- Land use planning. Unless the City starts focusing on managed growth as a central issue, it will sprawl and exacerbate a whole host of interconnected problems. ✓✓
- Urban sprawl and what goes with it – overlooking transportation issues, green spaces, lack of planning and collaboration between City, County, Schools and infrastructure. ✓✓✓✓
- No cohesive development plan. ✓

What are you most concerned about in our City?

Miscellaneous:

- Amenities (parks, recreation, trails, community facilities), the things that improve our quality of life and encourage others to relocate to Billings.
- Support for nonprofit sector.
- Public transportation.
- Need to extend the bus hours.
- Casinos, casinos and casinos. ✓✓✓✓✓
- Need for more accommodating public transit, especially with tight economy and need to get around without a car.
- Street and road maintenance. ✓
- Lack of amenities and maintenance for Parks. ✓
- Park maintenance.
- Traffic flow is poor. We seem to have the “small town” thinking, instead of considering how to move traffic with a larger population. Roundabouts are a start. ✓✓✓✓✓
- Road construction.

What are you most concerned about in our City?

Miscellaneous (continued):

- Lack of youth activities for teens.
- Traffic enforcement.
- The demographic shift toward an older population makes Billings a difficult place to raise children.
- The perception of our community.
- The educational system – our children's ability to get to school, funding, dropout rate, etc.
✓✓
- The need to invest money in quality of life projects and on our educational system.
- The lack of a public swimming pool in the heights.
- Need bike racks scattered throughout the City.
- Recycling and environmental issues.
- The demise of vital retail downtown.
- Snow removal.