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# Moana Springs Aquatic and Fitness Center: The problem inside the solution

**Richard Wait** Reno Gazette Journal

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No two ways about it: the new Moana Springs Aquatics and Fitness Center, which is currently under construction, is a much-needed answer to our region's long-standing aquatic woes. Where once existed a vibrant network of facilities that produced year after year of splash-filled joy, water-safe youth, lifelong fitness engagement, and competitive champions of national acclaim, there is now a dire need for more (and better) facilities to serve our growing population.

This center has the potential to change area aquatics for the better, but only if the City of Reno wakes up to a glaring fault in the facility's design. We're talking about its locker rooms, which are far too small to comfortably accommodate the needs of its daily swim and fitness users. These individuals deserve reasonable personal space to change their clothes with dignity and without distress.

If completed as currently planned, Moana's primary private changing space will be historically small compared to existing area facilities — 40% less than Carson City Aquatic Center, the region's next-newest facility. And yet, the Moana will have the potential to host 15% more visitors than Carson at any given time. More users, less changing space. In what world would this be considered intelligent, forward-thinking design?

Sierra Nevada Community Aquatics has suggested converting Moana's planned public-viewable locker areas into private changing areas, but City personnel claim it would delay the facility's completion and increase costs. In consulting likely users about delayed completion and added costs, we've heard overwhelming support for doing the right thing. Cost increases like these are typically within established budget allowances. But when asked about available contingency funds, City personnel have refused to reveal the bottom-line facts.

Now is the time for transparency, communication, and right-minded action. Thus, we respectfully request that our mayor, city manager and City Council engage, understand,

discuss and act to avoid the grand mistake that's currently in progress.

Our greatest hope is that Moana Springs will be a flagship facility in every regard, one worthy of this region's robust aquatic legacy. Conversely, our most significant concern is that it may eventually be dubbed "the dream facility that fell *just* short." Legacies are forged in the details, painstaking, openly debated details. Optimal locker room design is one of those details.

We must work through this matter, assess the wealth of empirical insight available, and arrive at a simple, common-sense solution that meets the needs of those who will utilize this unique community asset.

Let's make Moana better before it is too late!

*Richard Wait is a native Renoite who spent many years at the previous Moana swimming pool.*

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