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Fond du Lac Family YMCA to rebuild on existing site

Fond du Lac Family YMCA Executive Director/CEO Greg Giles announced at its annual meeting Thursday the YMCA's intent to begin a capital campaign to raise \$12 million to build a new facility on its existing site.

"We are going right into the capital campaign to raise support dollars," Giles said. "The start of construction will depend on the progress of the capital campaign, which could take from six to eighteen months. Once construction starts, the project it will take 1½ to two years to complete."

Three members of the Fond du Lac community have volunteered to lead the fundraising campaign. Shelly Stayer, Adam Stone and Dr. William Mauthe will serve as campaign co-chairs. The rest of the campaign cabinet should be named within the next few weeks.

This project is necessary because the current YMCA facility is unable to meet the needs of the growing membership, Giles said.

"Our facility is very tired and our space is not functional," Giles said. "This is something we need to do in order to serve more families and to better service the community of Fond du Lac for the next 20 to 30 years."

The YMCA spent many months working on a plan for the organization's future.

"After much study and deliberation, it was decided that Fond du Lac could probably not support more than one facility at this time," Giles said. "Keeping the Y downtown at its present location seemed like the most cost effective decision. Not only will a new downtown facility enhance the growth and development of the downtown area, but it will also serve as a central location for all individuals and families who use the Y."

The project, estimated to cost \$12 million, consists of acquiring land along Military Road (including the old Everix lot), demolishing existing houses and unusable portions of the YMCA, rebuilding new sections and remodeling existing areas.

Giles said it is important to "rebuild" instead of just renovating.

"The current YMCA has been renovated to its max," he said. "For safety, security, functional and aesthetic reasons, a new building with an open concept and better use of space is being planned."

Initial plans include a family-friendly facility that will have a much larger aquatic component and updated mechanicals. The confusion of the current building will be

removed and the parking lot will double in size. And, since the new facility will be facing Military Road rather than Second Street, it is anticipated that Y users will enjoy easier access to the building.

There will also be some programming changes.

“Our programs will continue to be driven by our mission and will reflect the interests of the majority of our Y members and users,” Giles said. “There is a plan to significantly expand the aquatics program by designating a pool for lap swimming and another for family-oriented use and aquatics classes. The Life Management area will be expanded to nearly double the current size so there will be more equipment for participants to use for workouts.”

According to Giles, tennis will not be offered in the new facility. “In order to uphold the mission of the Y by serving more families in the community, we will be converting the current tennis area into space for other programs,” he said.

“The project is being planned with the needs of the community in mind. A healthy YMCA helps to address issues like rising health care costs, childhood obesity and offers family-friendly opportunities to come together,” Giles said. “It also makes the city more appealing for families and businesses considering relocating to the area.”

The project should not affect membership or program rates.

“We do not anticipate that substantial increases in rates and fees will occur as a result of the project,” Giles said. “However, annual inflationary (cost of living) increases will be reflected in membership rates and participant fees.”

(Sidebar)

New facility will house Boys & Girls Club

The proposed new Fond du Lac Family YMCA facility will also become home for the local Boys & Girls Club.

"Collaboration and partnership is not new to the Boys & Girls Club and YMCA," said Boys & Girls Club Executive Director Stan Kocos. "Both our organizations, along with other community partners, have been working together to provide programs and services for youth in our community. It makes perfect sense for us to maximize our resources by pooling them together, as we work with many of the same children and families."

The Boys and Girls Club will have their own space in the facility, but will have access to all the YMCA has to offer, YMCA Executive Director/CEO Greg Giles said.

"Many Boys & Girls Club members are currently also active Y members and vice versa," Giles said. "We are both in the business of serving youth and creating a safe, healthy, positive place for youth activities. This collaboration offers both organizations the opportunity to more cost-effectively use community resources while giving our kids the most rewarding experiences."

The partnership will be a positive one for the both the organizations and the people served.

"We look forward to having adequate space for our continually growing Boys & Girls Club membership and programs, focusing on the academic and social success of young people," Kocos said. "Of equal importance is their physical health and wellness, a strength of YMCA programming. Our partnership, enhanced by being located in the same facility, will allow us to meet the needs of the whole child, and in the end, will strengthen families and our community at-large."