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Newton YMCA plans major renovation for 2010

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(Courtesy: West Suburban YMCA)

The West Suburban YMCA on Church Street in Newton Corner will begin its latest renovations in January. The work is expected to be complete by October 2010.

By Matt Rocheleau, Globe Correspondent

Next month, the 99-year-old West Suburban YMCA facility in Newton Corner will begin work on its third and final major renovation since 2000.

Set to begin in January, plans include installing new fitness equipment, expanding the youth center and adding music clubhouse, improving the boys' and men's locker rooms, and upgrading the Y's website and information systems.

Over the past decade, the West Suburban YMCA has spent around \$10.3 million on improving its facility – including the addition of a new pool and its New Balance track and field, renovations to the women's locker rooms, and upgrades to make its heating system more efficient.

The center said in announcement Monday, it hopes to complete another \$2.5 million in changes in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its Church Street building next October.

And, the organization's leaders said the new, updated space will be warmly welcomed and quickly put to use, as even in the recession, the center saw membership increase.

"I think people are doing a little more value-shopping and looking for family-oriented activities," said the center's Vice President for Organizational Advancement, Duffy Brent.

The improvements present the YMCA with a "major challenge" due to the building's age and the center's desire to continue serving its 13,000 members

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and program participants during the construction period, according to a press release.

However, management is working to keep renovation-related disruptions to a minimum.

“We recognize the inconvenience that a large scale renovation project may cause some members, but we think the improvements are critical to those we serve now and to those of the next generation,” YMCA President & CEO said Pat Palmer said in the release. “These renovations, which are being funded through donations to our ‘Advance the Legacy’ fund raising campaign, allow us to realize the complete make-over of our main facility that began over a decade ago.”

In January, new, state-of-the-art fitness and cardio equipment will be installed in the 4,400-square-foot Adult and Youth Fitness Centers.

Equipment will include Life Fitness treadmills, ellipticals, bicycles and steppers, Cybex arc trainers, Precor AMT’s with personal TV’s, and Keiser spin bikes. Also included is a complete signature line of Life Fitness selectorized equipment as well as select pieces of the Hoist “Roc It” line. The Youth Fitness Center will offer all members interactive, calorie-burning games such as Dance Dance Revolution and the Nintendo Wii.

“To meet people’s changing and expanding exercise needs, we will be offering more equipment options to our YMCA members. In this way, we hope there is something for everyone.” Fitness and Wellness Director Jane Carroll said in the release.

“The cardio and selectorized equipment we’re replacing is three-years old,” added Carroll. “This is when this type of equipment begins to have mechanical problems, so it makes more sense for us to offer the most modern equipment to our YMCA members than to pay for continuous repairs to the older machines.”

The YMCA will be an eight- to 10-month renovation of its 6,000 square-foot basement level that will double the number of youth and teens it can serve in its Youth Community Center.

Expansion plans include a Music Clubhouse with a digital music studio and three rehearsal and practice rooms, multi-station technology/homework/learning center, and expanded recreation area.

Additional changes are planned for boys’ and men’s locker rooms. The original whirlpool and sauna will be replaced, the multi-purpose space for health and wellness programming will be expanded and more private changing rooms will be built.

The center will also redesign its website and information systems with the hope that they will be faster, more user-friendly, and more interactive.

Purchasing or renewing memberships will be available online, as well as the registration process for programs, including Y’s camps. Members will be able to use the site for such things as signing up for classes, reserving racquetball court time, and booking a personal training session. Members will also be able to access their activity history and print out past invoices and receipts.

“We are excited about streamlining our information systems and eager to make the registration processes easier for everyone coming to our YMCA.” said Palmer. “The days of long lines extending out our front doors with parents registering for their child’s swim class or Camp Chickami are in the past.”

The center also began leasing from the city of Newton about eight weeks ago on the ground floor of the former Newton Corner Library branch. The YMCA holds dance classes there Tuesday afternoons, and Brent said the center is interested in securing a long-term lease from the city for some or all of the building’s space.

“We’re always looking for ways to expand.” Brent said.

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The West Suburban YMCA, located in Newton, Massachusetts, is a nonprofit community service organization that relies on donations, members, and volunteers.

Founded in 1877, the West Suburban YMCA serves communities west of Boston with day and resident camps in Newton, Wayland, and East Brookfield.

For more information, visit www.westsuburbanymca.org.

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