



The plans for the building include re-opening windows that had previously been bricked over.

Pittsfield YMCA Planning \$5 Million Renovation Project

By Andy McKeever

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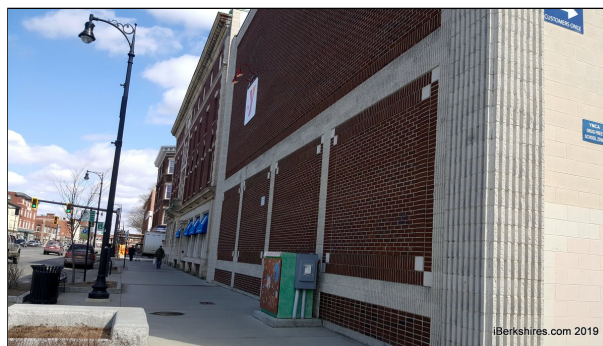
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PITTSFIELD, Mass. — The YMCA is planning a \$5 million renovation project to its downtown building.

The plan is to overhaul the interior of the building and restore large windows on the front and side facades.

The organization believes it will increase the amount of space in all areas while preserving the architectural landscape.

"Our plan is to modernize the front of the building, make it all glass," said Executive Director Randy Kinnas.



The YMCA has been an anchor on North Street for years and may soon get a face-lift.

The work will restore the outward appearance of the building to the original 1909 condition. It will re-open bricked over windows on the Melville Street side of the building, which were covered in the 1960s, to bring in more natural light. The entire brick facade will then be repointed. Failing mortar joints will be repaired to prevent leaks.

Kinnas said originally the building was glass but was bricked over likely for heat retention. But, now glass can be energy efficient and that's what the Y is planning to use.

Inside, the child care section will be expanded and moved together into the Melville Street side of the building, whereas now it is spread out throughout. Kinnas said the rooms will be improved with such things as a bathroom in each classroom, which is modern quality standards. It will also allow the Y to expand its license from 13 children per class to 20, he said.

A new basketball court will be installed, an indoor track built, and the fitness and aquatics areas will be completely overhauled -- all with a very open concept and one that will take up the current space used for racquetball. The indoor track is eyed to offer more recreational opportunities in cold and inclement weather as well as a smooth surface for seniors, people with disabilities, and those who are rehabilitating from injuries.

The basketball court is planned to support the basketball program that is currently being held in leased spaces elsewhere in the city.

"Every area will get some type of expansion to it," Kinnas said.

The project is also eyed to increase safety, will lead to the hiring of additional staff members, and make the Y even more accessible.

"We're going to bring a new facility to the downtown area where it is accessible to everyone," Kinnas said. "Why can't everybody have access to quality services?"

The Y is calling the project "vision 2020" and hopes to have it completed by the end of next year. But first, the organization needs to get its financing in place.

The YMCA is currently working on securing the finances for the project through a number of means including historic and new market tax credits, possible lending from MassDevelopment, grants from the state, the city's Community Preservation Act funds, and a capital campaign to be launched this year.

"We are trying to get some of the final numbers as we can start working," Kinnas said. "It's going to be in between \$5 and \$6 million."

Kinnas said the YMCA will be launching a capital campaign to help raise the money. The goal is to raise \$6 million to ensure there are enough funds to complete the entire project at once.

"Our hope is by the end of 2020 we have this project completed ... We think we can do this all in one shot," Kinnas said.

Hill Engineering has drawn up renderings of what it will look like and Kinnas said the Y is contracting with a Boston firm to design the child care areas.



Hill Engineers has created renderings of what the YMCA could look like in the future.

funds.

"The project will contribute significantly to the revitalization of downtown Pittsfield and increase positive pedestrian activity on North Street."

The project would be yet another renovation to that section of North Street, which has seen a lot of work in recent years.

"We believe that maintaining the physical fabric of our neighborhood boosts not only the aesthetic of downtown but feelings of safety and pride among residents. Both of these factors will contribute positively to our local economy and civic life," Kinnas wrote.

The project has been some two years in the making. Kinnas said he was having dinner with a donor who asked what was in the brick building next to the Y. Kinnas said he explained that it was still the Y and that's where the fitness and pool are located. The donor suggested opening up so people would know.

And it stuck. The Y decided to do just that.

"Overall the project will make the YMCA more sustainable, increasing the number of child-care slots we can provide to families of modest means, modernizing our aquatic, fitness, health and wellness for children and adults while also conserving and highlighting an important part of our city's architectural landscape and history," Kinnas wrote in an application looking for a \$200,000 grant from the city's CPA