



This is an architect's rendering of what an expanded East Kildonan Y would look like.

YM-YWCA plans \$1.5-M expansion for E.K. branch

By Aldo Santin

THE YM-YWCA is proposing a \$1.5-million expansion of the East Kildonan Y, which has seen its membership grow more than 800 per cent in the last eight years.

Dave Young, YM-YWCA CEO, said once required zoning approvals have been obtained from city hall, construction will start in July on a project that will increase the 454 Kimberly Ave. facility's square footage from 34,000 square feet to 43,000 square feet and add 40 additional parking stalls.

"We've been planning this for two or three years and we're at the point now where we're going forward," Young said.

The project includes adding 2,400 square feet on the ground floor, 6,800 square feet on the second floor and renovating 2,800 square feet of existing space.

Young said he's expecting a smoother reception from area residents — compared to strong neighbourhood hostility to a plan to expand the south St. Vital Y.

"We had a smaller expansion four years ago and the residents supported it and I expect we'll get the same support this time," Young said.

Architectural drawings are on display in the East K branch lobby. Staff held an open house last night to answer questions and a second open house is set for March 11, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Young said Winnipeggers have embraced the Y philosophy, with its membership across the city rising dramatically from 14,000 five years ago to over 38,000 members today. A new branch was built in west Winnipeg on Portage Avenue. The East Kildonan Y has seen similar growth, he said. Eight years ago, the facility had a membership of 1,000 people; that climbed to about 3,000 members five years ago. Today, membership there is at 8,600.

"We're successful because we offer a range of programming at prices that are family-friendly," Young said.

Young said construction would start in July, when membership activity falls off for the summer. The project should be completed in December. During construction, the main lobby will be closed, he said, and members

will have to use a rear entrance near the gym.

The project was designed by the local firm Smith Carter Architects and Engineers. The Kimberly branch is located on a small parcel of land between Miles Macdonell Collegiate and the Melrose Park Community Centre. On-site parking is limited and often hard to find on busy weekends when the entire branch is busy with members ranging in age from four to 80. To accommodate its small space, a large part of the second-floor addition will be constructed on piles over the east side driveway.

When completed, the fitness room (which includes free weights and exercise machines) will be relocated to the new second level in an area 50 per cent larger than the existing area. A new observation deck will be constructed adjacent to the pool. The existing locker areas will be expanded and a family locker-room will be added. The existing lobby, offices and main floor washrooms will be demolished and replaced with a new lobby and offices.