

YMCA plans aquatic center in Brookfield

*By Robert Gold
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An Olympic-size pool should open next summer in Brookfield, since the regional YMCA will receive a \$2.1 million loan for the project.

The Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut plans to replace three pools built in the 1950s with a 50-meter glass-enclosed pool it hopes can attract people from outside the area.

"This definitely is a community asset," said Gary Kozak, CEO of the regional YMCA.

The pool will be part of a \$2.9 million aquatic center with an aluminum frame and glass walls that can be removed during the summer.

"It will give it a nice outdoor feel during the summer," said Greg Dembowski, the capital campaign director for the Western Connecticut YMCA.

Since April, it's raised about \$850,000. The loan will pay for the pool. Adding 17 parking spaces, the glass structure, and a locker room will cost another \$1.4 million.

About 300 kids a day participate in Camp Greenwood at the YMCA every summer, Kozak said. The new pool should create enough space for another 60 people. It will also mean more space for the YMCA's swim team and members eager to take a dip.

Plus, it will give the YMCA another year-round pool.

YMCA officials said the old pools were falling apart, including their piping and filtering systems.

"It's amazing they lasted that long," Dembowski said.

Without the new pool, the camp swimming program was in jeopardy of continuing.

The loan was backed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture "rural development" loan program. It is underwritten by Union Savings Bank, Newtown Savings Bank, NewMil Bank and Savings Bank of Danbury.

Dembowski said the 39-year loan hasn't officially closed yet.

Richard and Dorothy Lambert, who use the YMCA's existing indoor pool -- which won't be altered-- said the project was great news.

"It's nice they can use the (other) pool year-round," Dorothy Lambert said after the couple's daily swim.

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YMCA pool patrons like 4-year-old Eric Gleissner of Danbury and instructor Cassie Russell should have a new pool to use next summer in Brookfield.

Coming soon

The Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut hopes to build a \$2.9 million aquatic center at its Brookfield facility.

Includes 50-meter swimming pool

Enclosed by glass and aluminum frame structure. Glass walls can be removed during summer. Roof will be able to retract.

The Y hopes to have the pool ready to use by next summer, but the glass structure is not expected to be complete by then.

Replaces three smaller outdoor pools built in the 1950s.

The Y has raised \$850,000 so far for the project.