

YMCA has a new home in South Norwalk

By [Erin Kayata](#) 3:23 pm EST, Thursday, January 30, 2020

NORWALK — The YMCA will have a home in Norwalk once more.

The Riverbrook Regional YMCA has used public school buildings and the Wilton YMCA to offer programming since its [West Avenue headquarters closed in 2012](#). But now, the organization is moving to new headquarters in South Norwalk after the Common Council approved funds and a lease for the property at 98 South Main St.

Bob McDowell, CEO of the Riverbrook Regional YMCA, said as soon as the lease is finalized, the organization can begin fundraising, putting out RFPs for capital improvement projects and programming. The lease is expected to be finalized within the next several months, with a potential for programming to begin as soon as mid-April.

"This is an outstanding result for this building," said District E Common Council member Tom Livingston. "We think it'll be a great addition to the city and South Norwalk. The Y is returning and providing a lot of important services to the community."

In 2018, [the city acquired the Main Street building for \\$300,000](#), buying back half of the property from the South Norwalk Community Center and gaining the ownership of interest owned by Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now, which went bankrupt. The city then put additional money into capital improvements for the building, such as fixing the roof.

The approved lease is for 30 years. Mario Coppola, the city's corporation counsel, previously said the building will be exempt from taxes and charged limited fees due to the role it's playing in the South Norwalk community. Rent will be \$1 a year. Residents would pay a nominal fee for access to the YMCA.

[The YMCA will match the \\$1.2 million the city put toward their capital improvements](#) (\$200,000 of which was given last August), meaning the Y has \$2.4 million to start. The money the city is using for the YMCA comes from the \$3.5 million given by Brookfield Properties, developers of The SoNo Collection, to help with the redevelopment of South Norwalk. Funds to originally purchase back the property also came from the Brookfield payment.

The remaining funds needed for the \$5 million capital renovations will be raised via private fundraising. McDowell said the organization did a fundraising study to set the budget and determine how much they'd need to raise.

"We're poised and ready to go," he said. "It's hard to raise the money now because we don't have a signed lease."

Programming would still continue throughout construction, McDowell said, similar to what was done during the [recent renovation of the Wilton YMCA](#). [The space would not have a pool or basketball court](#), but early renderings show the potential for a modern facade made of glass or brick. The new building will also have space for science, technology, engineering and math, visual arts, wellness and music programs.

McDowell said the YMCA will introduce programs as the space for them becomes available. [According to the lease term sheet](#), many health and fitness programs, such as community lectures and a walking club, would be available as soon as the building opens, with more educational and fitness programs being added as construction is completed.

The building is currently occupied by Americares and the South Norwalk Community Center. McDowell said both will remain in the facility, and there have even been discussions with Americares to expand into the building where they already provide health care visits to 3,500 uninsured people a year. There have also been conversations with the Norwalk Housing Authority to centralize its learning centers at the property post-renovation.

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