



Northwest Family YMCA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

August 2010

What is the status of the Northwest Family YMCA now?

On July 15, 2010, the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), the state agency responsible for land use in Radisson, unanimously determined that the Northwest Family YMCA is a “community facility” within the meaning of the Radisson General Project Plan (GPP), and therefore an allowable use of the land we purchased in Radisson to build the Northwest Family YMCA. We have now resumed the site plan approval process with the Town of Lysander Planning Board.

Who decided to build a YMCA in Baldwinsville?

Baldwinsville community leaders approached the YMCA a decade ago about building a Y in Baldwinsville. A group of community volunteers formed a board to identify a site, develop a building plan and raise the funds needed to build the Northwest Family YMCA. The Baldwinsville Board reports to the Greater Syracuse Metro Board, also a group of community volunteers.

What do we hope to accomplish?

The Y works every day to address the issues about which Americans are most concerned. We offer programs to help kids reach their potential, to help families and individuals achieve better health outcomes and to encourage everyone to get involved and make their community a better place. Our aim is to bring more services to more people in the key areas of youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

What will the YMCA bring to our community?

The YMCA is a non-profit community organization whose mission is to strengthen families, enrich communities and improve health and well-being for all, particularly children and seniors. No one is ever turned away from the YMCA due to inability to pay. The Northwest Family YMCA will feature a health and wellness center, an art and music center, a field house with a gymnasium and sport courts, a senior center, a teen center, a Family Prime Time area, and an aquatics center.

Who is building the YMCA?

The proposed Northwest Family YMCA is being built by the community for the community. It is our responsibility to raise the money and design the Y to meet the needs of the community.

How close are we to our fundraising goal?

We have already raised 75 percent of the funds needed to begin construction. Assuming standard building cost formulas, we need to raise an additional \$4.8 million to build the Northwest Family YMCA.

How can I help open the doors of the Northwest Family YMCA?

Now is the time! A great way to show your support for the Northwest Family YMCA is through a pledge. You can pledge your support now, but defer your payment until the project receives approval to begin construction. To make a pledge to the Northwest Family YMCA, please visit our website at www.ymcaofgreatersyracuse.org/northwest/ or contact Sarah Beth Lardie, Capital Campaign Director, at 751-3055.

When was the current site purchased?

In 2006, the YMCA of Greater Syracuse purchased a 22-acre property at the corner of Route 31 and Drake's Landing Road in the Town of Lysander to build the Northwest Family YMCA.

What are the plans for the facility and site?

As mentioned above, the Northwest Family YMCA will feature a health and wellness center, an art and music center, fitness studios, a gymnasium and sport courts, a senior center, a teen center, a Family Prime Time area, and an aquatics center. The site plan includes a 98,000 square foot facility on two stories and parking for approximately 350 vehicles. The building footprint is approximately 60,000 square feet – only about 20 percent of the property. Of the 22 acres owned by the YMCA, 55 percent of the land will be developed and the remaining 45 percent will be undeveloped.

Why did the YMCA and community leaders choose this particular site?

The proposed site of the Northwest Family YMCA on the corner of Route 31 and Drake's Landing Road was selected in 2006 after considering several alternatives in a long and thorough search in the northwest area of Onondaga County. The location offers visibility to all Lysander residents and provides ease of access from Route 31. Moreover, the site fits with the General Project Plan for Radisson, which specifies the desirability of a year-round recreational facility, and is located adjacent to a proposed school site and Kerri Hornaday Park, creating a campus like setting of community services.

Is the site appropriately zoned for a YMCA?

Yes. One common misconception is that the proposed site of the Northwest Family YMCA is in an area zoned solely for single-family homes. This is not correct. In fact, within Radisson, the classification of land under the broad category of "residential" includes single-, two-, and multi-family residences as well as Special Uses, as defined in Radisson's General Project Plan (GPP) dating to 1971. In the GPP, "special uses" of residential areas include such things as "medical and educational institutions", "community

services”, “recreational uses, both public and private”, and “neighborhood commercial uses” (GPP 1971:25).

The ESDC reiterated that the YMCA is indeed a community facility as defined by the GPP, and therefore an appropriate use of the land, in its unanimous land use determination on July 15, 2010.

Can the location be changed?

The YMCA purchased the land in 2006. The Northwest Family YMCA’s Facility Committee, comprised of community volunteers with expertise in engineering, architecture and landscape design, worked with Robertson Strong Apgar Architects (RSA) and Keplinger Freeman Associates (landscape architecture) to develop the site plan. This group has invested extensive time and money to develop a site and facility plan. If the Northwest Family YMCA is not built at this location, it will not be built elsewhere in Radisson.

Where do the anticipated Northwest Family YMCA members live?

This location can easily serve Radisson residents as well as the greater Lysander, Baldwinsville, Van Buren and Clay community, and will not require excessive traffic through Radisson.

Will there be sufficient parking at the YMCA?

The site plan has been designed to provide ample parking; approximately 350 parking spaces are included in the site plan.

Why not renovate the Ice Arena and use the existing Baldwinsville YMCA School Age Child Care site?

After seeing the success at the East Area Family YMCA in Fayetteville and joining forces with the overcrowded North Area Family YMCA in Liverpool, we determined that the Baldwinsville Ice Arena, where the YMCA School Age Child Care center is housed, is too small to meet our future members’ needs. Additionally we could not retrofit the building to accommodate all of the activities without sacrificing the two popular and successful ice rinks. With the revival of the ice arena programs and the limited land that is usable, we would not be able to have adequate parking at that site.

Why not just move into the Radisson industrial park?

If the YMCA were located in the commercial/industrial section of Radisson, Y users would be traveling through the center of Radisson to access the facility. Excessive traffic through the heart of Radisson has been one of the primary concerns of Radisson residents, and the Rte. 31 and Drake’s Landing location, on the southeast corner of Radisson, minimizes this.

Most importantly, the Rte. 31 and Drake’s Landing location is a much safer location for Y users, particularly children and seniors. This location allows for children, families and seniors to safely travel to the facility on foot or by bicycle. This is ideal for the residents of Radisson. If we had found a site in the corporate park, this would not have been the case, as there is significant tractor-trailer and commercial traffic in this area.

What about traffic to the facility?

As with other Y facilities in Onondaga County, traffic to and from the Northwest Family YMCA will be dispersed throughout the day. The majority of traffic to the facility – approximately 85 percent or more, as estimated by our knowledge of membership draw – will come from Route 31 to the west or east, and River Road to the south.

Did the Y conduct a traffic study?

Yes, in 2009 the YMCA commissioned a traffic study for the Northwest Family YMCA, which was completed by a licensed and certified traffic engineer, Gordon Stansbury of GTS Consulting. The traffic study was conducted in accordance with all standard industry practices and methodologies. Using current weekday and weekend traffic counts as well as data provided by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT), the study included a full evaluation of existing operations, future operations with expected annual increases in traffic levels (including traffic associated with the Riverknoll apartments on Rte. 31 and the Timber Banks development on River Road), as well as future operations with expected traffic increases due to the YMCA.

What were the results of the traffic study?

With recent roadway improvement projects completed on Route 31, the traffic study found that there is more than enough capacity to accommodate the additional traffic generated by the YMCA through the signalized intersections in the area. To summarize the trip generation estimates in the traffic study for the various peak times, the proposed YMCA is not considered a major traffic generator and will generate less than 100 vehicles per hour entering or exiting, even during its busiest hours of operation. To put this into perspective for the residents of the area, if you spread this traffic over an hour, motorists entering or exiting Drake's Landing can expect an additional 1-2 cars stacking at the Rte. 31 signal per cycle of the traffic light.

The traffic study concluded: "The additional traffic generated by the proposed Northwest YMCA will have no adverse impacts on traffic operations within the study area provided minor signal timing adjustments are made at the intersection of Route 31 with Drake's Landing Road. Any increase in delay resulting from the proposed development will generally be minor and unnoticeable to motorists in the area" (Stansbury, Traffic Impact Assessment – Proposed Northwest YMCA, November 2009).

Okay, but how will turning left from Drake's Landing onto Rte. 31 in the morning, to give one example, be impacted by the Y?

The left turn from Drakes Landing Road onto Rte. 31 has been a source of frustration for some Radisson residents. The traffic study included this specific turn in its projections of new (Y-related) traffic in the area. The Y is projected to generate an additional 31 vehicles turning left onto Rte. 31 during the morning peak hour (7:15-8:15am). This equates to an 11 percent increase over the existing 270 vehicles that make this movement today, or approximately 1 additional vehicle per cycle of the traffic signal. This minor increase in traffic will be offset by the increase in signal green time that has been recommended to the DOT for the Drake's Landing approach.

What about the use of Radisson amenities such as trails, etc. by YMCA members?

In response to concerns raised by Radisson residents, there will be no connections between the Northwest Family YMCA and the Radisson trail system. The activities at the YMCA will all be taking place within the walls of the YMCA. Members will be coming to the YMCA for Y activities.

How many members will the Northwest YMCA have?

We anticipate approximately 13,000 new members of the Northwest Family YMCA; more than half (approximately 7,000) of these new members will be the children of the expected 2,500 new family members.

Does the community support the Northwest Family YMCA?

Yes, the Lysander and Radisson community strongly supports the location of the Northwest Family YMCA at the corner of Route 31 and Drake's Landing Road. In early 2010, the YMCA commissioned a public opinion poll of the issue by Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc. (RMS), a Baldwinsville firm. RMS conducted an independent telephone survey of a random sample of Lysander and Radisson residents (adults aged 18 and above). In this survey, 81 percent of Lysander adults said they support the location of the Northwest Family YMCA at the corner of Route 31 and Drake's Landing. Within Radisson alone, a majority of residents also support the location; 66 percent of Radisson residents stated that they support that location. When those who said they did not support the location were asked if they would support it if they knew the YMCA would not be built elsewhere in the Town of Lysander, support grew to 85 percent among Lysander residents in general and 72 percent among Radisson residents.

How will the Northwest Family YMCA affect our quality of life?

The results of the 2010 telephone survey conducted by RMS indicated that 86 percent of respondents stated that the Northwest Family YMCA will enhance the quality of life in the greater Baldwinsville area.

Has the Y taken the concerns of neighbors into consideration?

Yes, we have listened to the opinions of neighbors and have made several modifications to the Northwest Family YMCA site plan, including:

- The overall size and the footprint of the building were reduced;
- The site entrance and exit were moved so that they do not line up with Oakbrook Road;
- The building entrance was rotated to face north rather than east, and the building was moved further from Drakes Landing and closer to Rte. 31;
- Proposed connections to the Radisson trail system and Radisson's Kerri Hornaday Park; were removed;
- A traffic study was commissioned to research the traffic impact on the area. The traffic engineer concluded that the additional traffic generated by the Y will have no adverse impacts on the traffic on Drake's Landing or surrounding streets provided minor signal timing adjustments are made by the DOT.

Was the deed for the YMCA property changed?

Yes, the deed concerning clarity of use was corrected prior to the YMCA closing on the purchase of the property. The YMCA is subject to all of the restrictions and limitations set forth in the Radisson Declaration.

Will the Northwest Family YMCA benefit the local economy in Baldwinsville?

Yes, the YMCA will have a positive impact on the local economy without tax incentives. The Y will provide approximately 325 full- and part-time jobs with an estimated annual payroll of \$2.5 million. The Greater Syracuse YMCA is currently Onondaga County's largest employer of teens. Many area youth will be employed by the Northwest Family YMCA.

Was there a lawsuit involving the YMCA?

Yes, in 2008, a lawsuit was brought against the YMCA and the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), the state agency that determines land use in Radisson. The lawsuit challenged a letter the ESDC sent to the Town of Lysander Planning Board that stated the YMCA was an appropriate use of the land the YMCA purchased in 2006 to build the Northwest Family YMCA.

In March 2010, the New York State Supreme Court found in favor of the YMCA and ESDC on several points, including denying efforts for an injunction or any relief designed to halt process. Yet the Court remanded the YMCA back to the ESDC for review and reissue of the land use determination originally requested by the Town of Lysander Planning Board.

As mandated by the Court, the ESDC conducted a public hearing on the issue on May 12, 2010. All interested community members had equal opportunity to attend this public hearing and to speak to ESDC representatives.

What happened at the ESDC public hearing?

The purpose of the hearing was to listen to comments from area residents to determine whether the YMCA is a community facility and therefore an allowable use of the land. Nearly all the speakers, including those who opposed the use of this site for a YMCA, agreed that the Y provides a community service. The public hearing, and the support of the proposed location of the Northwest Family YMCA demonstrated at the hearing, was a reminder that the community at large, both within Radisson and throughout Lysander, wants a YMCA, and wants it at this location.

What was the outcome of the ESDC's land use determination?

After reviewing over 120 verbal and written comments as well as the Radisson Community Association (RCA) Mission Statement and the Radisson General Project Plan (GPP), on July 15, 2010, the ESDC Board of Directors unanimously determined that the proposed Northwest Family YMCA is indeed a "community facility" as defined by the Radisson GPP. "A majority of comments support this position, as does the language of the GPP itself," noted the ESDC. The YMCA and the Town of Lysander have now resumed the site plan approval process.