

Boys & Girls Club looks to clear first hurdle

Clubs & Associations
Zoning committee to consider \$5 million project Friday

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LIVE OAK — A new Live Oak Boys & Girls Club could get a leg up this week with its first official county approval.

On Friday, the county's zoning committee will consider the \$5 million, 11,500-square-foot club, which would open in 2015 and include classrooms, a game room, a dance studio and a digital media center. It would also stand as one of the county's last major redevelopment projects.

"It looks like we're moving forward," said Keith Houchen, who is helping steer the project on behalf of the Live Oak Unified School District. "I think it's getting really exciting."

To be located on the grounds of Shoreline Middle School, the project is being paid for entirely through the county's Redevelopment Agency, which set aside funds before being disbanded in 2011.

Backers say it will benefit Shoreline students during school hours and area youths after school. It will be available for community use in the evening, and represents a coming-together of two government agencies and a local nonprofit in order to build a project.

"It's a great deal for the community," said Supervisor John Leopold, who represents the area. "It's using redevelopment funds

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to create a permanent resource for young people in Live Oak. With a large number of young people, we don't have many recreational resources, so this would be a major addition."

The project is not expected to break ground until next spring, with construction lasting up to a year.

The coast looks clear for the project to proceed. The original 1993 approval to build Shoreline Middle School included plans for a gym of the same

size as the proposed club, which will sit on top of existing basketball courts and actually reduce the amount of pavement on the site.

An environmental review showed the project would have minimal impacts. However, backers are asking for permission to build a large sign that would be visible from 17th Avenue.

The Boys & Girls Club is raising \$1.5 million to pay for the club's ongoing operations. It expects to staff the center with 10 full-time employees and up to 10 volunteers.

Executive Director Bob Langseth said the club is in the early stages of fundraising but that he doesn't expect

raising enough money to keep the doors open to be a problem.

"We're very positive that our campaign is a doable campaign," Langseth said.

Before the state ended redevelopment, the county set aside millions for future projects, some of which are now moving forward in earnest.

In August, the state Coastal Commission will consider a suite of beachfront improvements at Twin Lakes State Beach. A planned riverfront park in Soquel Village is also expected to move forward.

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