

Plans for new Boys & Girls Club in Live Oak unveiled

Clubs + Associations

3-1-12



CONTRIBUTED
An artist's rendering of the center planned for Shoreline Middle School.

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SHORELINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

LIVE OAK — The Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz will be expanding its digs in Live Oak, with a facility almost 12 times the size of the portable classroom where programs now operate expected to be completed next year.

Dozens of residents listened to a presentation about the building planned for the Shoreline Middle School campus, and viewed a slideshow featuring an artist's rendering of the two-story building. It's a big step up from the 960-square-foot portable classroom

where the club's operated for more than a decade, offering such activities as homework assistance, sports and music programs.

It's only open to Shoreline students for now, but through a joint effort involving the county, Shoreline and the Boys & Girls Club, the new, 11,400-square-foot facility will be open to all children ages 6 to 18 from Live Oak, Soquel and surrounding areas.

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As envisioned, the new building will contain rooms dedicated to schoolwork, gaming, dancing, music and performing arts, even a cafe where cooking classes will be taught.

Before it was dismantled earlier this month, the county's Redevelopment Agency set aside \$5 million for the project, which will be owned by the Live Oak School District and rented out to the club for a small fee. When programs aren't in session, the building will be available to the school district and other community groups, according to Tom O'Rourke, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club.

Operational costs have been budgeted at \$450,000, he said, a big increase from the \$100,000 now paid for the portable classroom. Organizers plan to launch a capital campaign in the coming months to raise \$1.5 million, some of which will be used to buy furniture, computers and other items. That will leave about \$800,000 to cov-

er operating costs for the next two years.

"You don't want, as a community, and the district certainly doesn't want, an empty building after three years," he added.

Most in the audience viewed the plans favorably, but not all.

Bill and Brigid Simpkins, who helped raise millions for the Simpkins Family Swim Center, are opposed to the construction of a building that they believe will remain mostly empty. They say it would make more sense for the club to simply take over the upstairs section of the swim center that now houses

the county's parks and recreation department.

"I'm really concerned about that \$400,000 (in operational costs) every year," Bill Simpkins said. "I don't think it can be raised. And I don't think they can raise the \$1.5 million (though the capital campaign), but please prove me wrong."

But Supervisor John Leopold said the county has already entered into an agreement with the district, and the \$5 million has already been set aside specifically for the project.

Follow Sentinel reporter Kimberly White on Twitter @kwhite95066