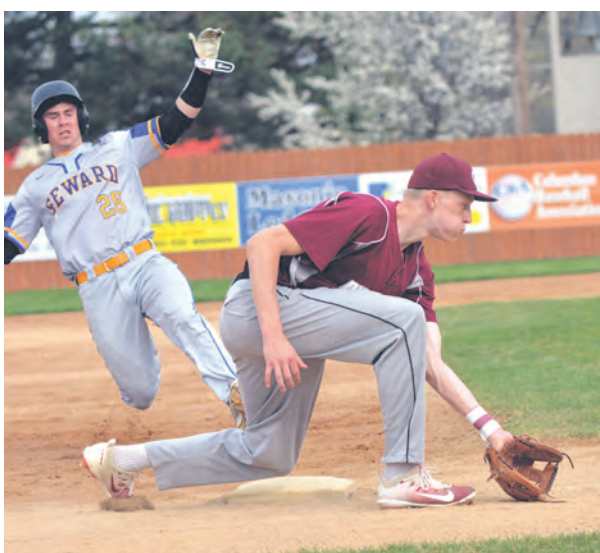


# POWER & PROGRESS

2019



# Economic development & business





An exterior view of Columbus Community Hospital, which will be renovated and expanded beginning this year.  
**COURTESY PHOTO, COLUMBUS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

# INVESTING IN HEALTH CARE

## Hospital launches expansion and renovation project

**MATT LINDBERG**  
 The Columbus Telegram

**C**olumbus Community Hospital's interior and exterior will change forever starting in the coming weeks.

This spring, CCH will commence work on a substantial \$35 million renovation effort that will drastically change its appearance inside and out, as well as vastly enhance services. The latter, hospital leaders say, will greatly benefit the thousands of people who rely on the local entity for health care.

The project will be a remodel and expansion – 45,000 square feet in new construction and about 31,000 square feet in remodeling.

“So all told, we’re touching over 75,000 square feet of space,” said CCH Vice President Scott Messersmith. “This is a very large project.”

The biggest structural change will be an expanded surgical services department, which will be built on the first floor of the hospital to the north of the existing surgical services department. Right now, tentative plans call for it to have five operating rooms with space dedicated to same-day surgeries, minor and endoscopic procedures.

The first floor will also be equipped with an addition to the east of the Prairie Wind Café, where conference rooms, simulation lab and a new cardiopulmonary rehabilitation department will be constructed.

The maternal child health department will be moving to the third floor with the skilled nursing and swing bed units moving to the second



**MATT LINDBERG, THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM**

Columbus Community Hospital Vice President of Operations Scott Messersmith, left, shows off site plans to CCH President/CEO Michael Hansen and Dorothy Bybee, vice president of patient care services and CNO, on a recent day in a hospital board room.

floor. With that change, officials noted, maternal child health will occupy space presently used for conference rooms and cardiopulmonary rehabilitation. The unit is expected to include eight rooms for labor, delivery, recovery and postpartum, in addition to four more rooms for postpartum care.

The first thing to happen will be construction crews in March working on the north addition and the staff parking area. That will be followed by work on the east addition.

“The east addition is critical because before

anything can move off of our third floor and our second floor up to our third floor, this has to be built first,” fellow CCH Vice President Dorothy Bybee said. “So conference rooms, administrative areas (simulation lab, conference rooms, nutritious services), that all has to happen before anything else can take place.”

The decision for the expansion didn’t come out of the blue. The project, which is slated for completion at the end of 2021, has been in the

Please see **HOSPITAL**, Page E3



**COURTESY PHOTO, COLUMBUS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

Christa Ruth, RN, Maternal Child Health helps Callie Wyman with her newborn, Kipton, in a current patient room at Columbus Community Hospital.



**COURTESY PHOTO, COLUMBUS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

Ginger Westfall, RN, Cardiac Rehabilitation, helps James Dixon on exercise equipment in the current Cardiac Rehabilitation department at Columbus Community Hospital.

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# Hospital

From E2

works for several years. CCH President/CEO Michael Hansen said the hospital's Senior Leadership Team and board of directors complete a Facility Master Plan and five-year strategic plan to eye where the organization is at and where it should be moving forward in an effort to best provide patients with top-tier facilities and treatment.

In the case of the expansion, it fits into those goals and is a necessity.

"Columbus is one of the few towns our size in Nebraska that continues to grow and flourish, and I think that's because we have a good mix of ag, manufacturing, health care and other things. There's just a great mix of business," Hansen said, noting a hospital community health assessment sent out every three years also tells officials what the community needs health-care wise. "We've been focusing on growing and have done quite a bit over the last nine years that I've been here."

The proof is in the pudding. Following the completion of CCH's last fiscal year, doctors completed roughly 400 more procedures than the previous fiscal period (an approximate 9-percent increase, according to Chad Van Cleave, CCH vice president of finance. CCH has also added several surgeons throughout the years to meet the need in the community, essentially outgrowing its 16-year-old facility in the process.

"We're really getting to the point where scheduling procedures is becoming more and more difficult. Surgeons typically like to operate early and typically don't like to stay really late, so you kind of have to compress everything into a very tight schedule," Hansen said. "So we continue to look at sustaining and growing our surgical lines with all those pressures in terms of the number of surgeries that we're doing."

The conceptual design for the project began about three years ago. Plans for the enhancements were put under a microscope and refined repeatedly before getting to this point – and that was strategic, Hansen stressed. The board expects officials to keep the project on time and budget, which Hansen said it will be.

"I think our team has done a good job with that. We wanted to make sure we did it right. I believe when you do something of this magnitude we need to get it right and do it right the first time," he said. "That involved communicating properly to all key stakeholders involved in this – physicians, staff, the board, everybody."

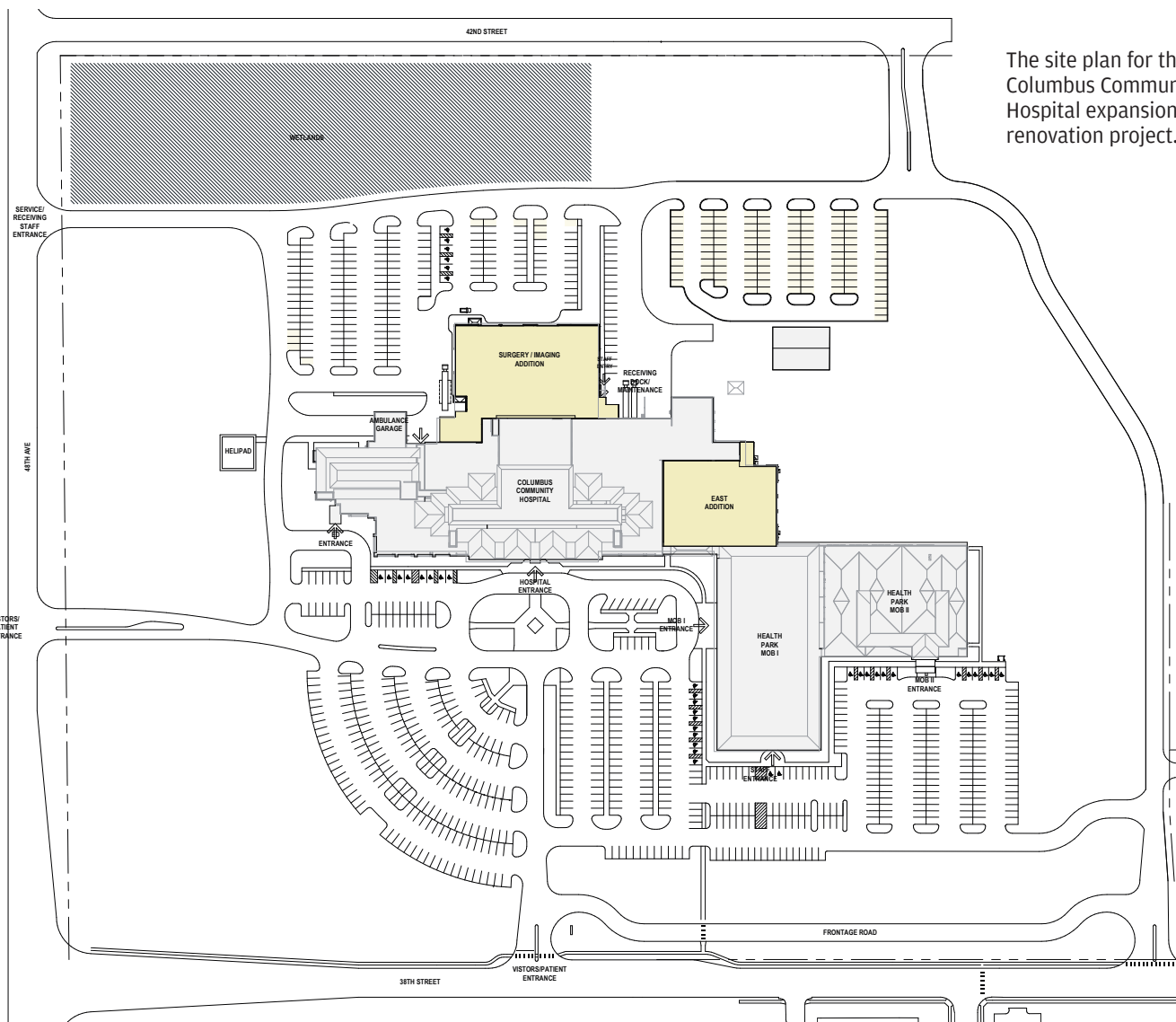
"We really had a lot of meetings to talk about this project, refine it and get it to where it is today because we want it to be a state-of-the-art facility that is going to last a long time and long after we're all gone. So we really took our time to do it right and it is fiscally responsible."

How it was executed was a crucial component. As hospital officials discussed how to proceed, they decided to remodel and expand rather than just the latter to be more cost-effective and mindful of generations to come.

"Why not just build 75,000 additional square feet of space?" Messersmith asked. "It's actually easier to modify our current space than to put it over the OR, which at that point you limit what you can potentially do in the future. If we were to put it over the OR and there were any sort of issues down the line, you might have to shut down the OR to make those changes. It just didn't make sense. Doing it this way is economically responsible."

CCH will maintain regular operations throughout the renovation process, however, its leaders acknowledge there will be some frustration as everyone who works or visits the site will have to adapt to the construction going on. Bybee said they're going to try to minimize the impact and continue to follow infection control protocol (practices used to prevent transmission of diseases that can be acquired by contact with blood, body fluids and non-intact skin, among other things).

Ultimately, she said, the minor construction inconveniences will be worth



The site plan for the Columbus Community Hospital expansion and renovation project.

## What's the financial impact?

Funds for the project are being allocated from the hospital's operational budget and donor-designed gifts provided through the Columbus Community Hospital Foundation. Hospital leaders want community members to rest assured knowing that hospital prices will not increase as a result of the project.

"We're going to use these dollars to improve technology and give back to the community in one way, shape or fashion," said Scott Messersmith, vice president of operations. "Fortunately, we are investing in our own facility, which means we are able to continue to provide excellent, high-quality, high-technology care that our patients wouldn't be able to receive otherwise."

The hospital will continue regular operations throughout the renovation process. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

For more information about Columbus Community Hospital or the expansion project, visit [www.columbushosp.org](http://www.columbushosp.org).

Source: Columbus Community Hospital



COURTESY PHOTO, COLUMBUS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Physicians, from left to right, Dr. Nila Novotny from Columbus Otolaryngology Clinic; Dr. Jon Kroenke from Columbus Children's Health Care; Dr. Michelle Sell from Columbus Family Practice; Dr. Margaret Egberts from Columbus Children's Health Care (seated); Dr. Edward Discoe from Columbus Medical Center (standing); Dr. Amanda Wilson from Columbus Women's Healthcare; Dr. Matthew Pieper from North Central Radiology; Dr. Jeremy Albin from Columbus General Surgery; and Dr. Richard Cimprich from Columbus Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Clinic.

enduring for all the terrific benefits that will come out of the enhancements.

"We have an opportunity to look at all those different areas and see how we can improve for the patients and staff. It's an exciting time to be here," she said. "We have a strong commitment to our community to provide services they need so that they don't have to go out of town. That is what has driven this expansion."

Messersmith agreed, noting that the upgrades will have no impact on the cost of day-to-day health care.

"This is an investment in our community, so good news is, because of this expansion, it allows us to do a lot of additional things but it does not impact the cost of health care in the community," he said. "The hospital is very financially stable with help from the (CCH Foundation). It just seems like the more we do, the more synergy we gain, we figure out the more we can do. It's about maximizing quality care for families close to home."

Matt Lindberg is the managing editor of The Columbus Telegram. Reach him via email at [matt.lindberg@lee.net](mailto:matt.lindberg@lee.net).



MATT LINDBERG, THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM FILE PHOTO

Columbus resident Nancy Schmitt, left, chats with Cori Fullner, office manager at Columbus Orthopedic & Sports Medicine on a September 2018 morning during the 15th annual Tune-Up for Life Community Health Fair inside the Columbus Wellness Center.



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# YEARS IN THE MAKING

Housing development to surge in Columbus in 2019

Columbus City Administrator Tara Vasicek is excited for the substantial housing projects scheduled to take place in the community during the next 18-24 month. The goal, she said, is to add 350-400 new doorways locally.  
SAM PIMPER PHOTOS, THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM

**SAM PIMPER**  
The Columbus Telegram

For years, community members and city officials have had one major thing on their minds: Housing.

Fortunately, 2019 is shaping up to be a year where thoughts, dreams and words are put into action regarding the construction of affordable housing.

In the next 18-24 months, Columbus Mayor Jim Bulkeley said that approximately 350-400 new doorways will be added into the community, most falling under the affordable workforce housing classification. In recent years, the city has only been able to add about 75 new doorways annually, he added.

"It's a combination of a lot of years finally coming to a head," he said, of the work leading to the city making real housing progress, during an interview



Land near Columbus Municipal Airport has been cleared so construction work can start on the Farmview Development, which calls for 24 multi-family units and 31 single-family units.

with The Telegram. "TIF (tax increment financing) really did tip one or two of these (current) developments with all of the infrastructure. TIF for residential

development was something we hadn't looked at (until 2018). It (the housing problem) has

Please see **DEVELOPMENTS**, Page E5

## Securing the Rural Workforce Housing Grant

**MATT LINDBERG**  
The Columbus Telegram

NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska's Board of Directors in mid-2018 approved special loan funds to be used on projects that will result in the building of the couple hundred new rental options and homes for sale in the city.

The three projects OK'd alone will result in a 350-percent increase in the annual number of units built over previous years in Columbus, City Administrator Tara Vasicek has told The Telegram. In 2018, she said Columbus has averaged about 70 a year for the past several years.

NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska, a private nonprofit com-

munity-based development corporation that uses federal, state and local funds to help individuals and families achieve homeownership, was announced in 2018 as one of 14 recipients (out of 21 total applications) of the state's Rural Workforce Housing Fund by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Gov. Pete Ricketts.

RWHF was created in 2017 in response to growing concerns from rural Nebraska communities claiming they could not attract a skilled, robust workforce and therefore lose out on potential economic development. Legislative Bill 518 (the Nebraska Rural

Please see **GRANT**, Page E5

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FROM THE MAYOR

# Economic development and Columbus

Much of the growth and success of Columbus can be tied directly to economic development. From the businessmen of the 1940s who were instrumental in bringing companies like Becton Dickinson to Columbus to today's leaders who are working to bring more business and retain existing business. So much of the vitality that



**JIM BULKLEY**

we see in our community can be tied directly to economic development. And we can be proud that we have it. We're even being pioneers in this area. Loup Power taking the initiative, years ago, to staff an economic development position has been huge. Add to this the City putting a ballot question to the people asking them to financially support economic development, which they resoundingly favored. All of this speaks to the success we have had. So often people think of the new big company that might be

coming to town. Yes, those are important and big economic development success stories. But economic development touches much more. It might be the expansion of a facility that adds a few new jobs. It might be the purchase of a new piece of equipment to modernize and add a few jobs. It might be a low-interest loan that when paid back can get used again for another project. All of this fuels the continued growth of our community. Because of this, we must be proactive and be a place where new

workers want to live and raise a family. We must modernize our Waste Water Treatment Plant to handle the needs of new business and new families. We must build and upgrade the streets to handle the traffic we residents require to call Columbus home. We cannot be complacent when it comes to economic development. We must continue to use the tools that are available and incorporate new and exciting tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF). We have been used as an example of success by many.

But now many are copying our blueprint. The playing field for attracting and keeping business is getting very competitive. But we must stay the course and stay aggressive. We cannot rest. Our history is a proud testament to the success of economic development. Columbus will continue to take advantage of the tools available and grow. We have a proven track record and we have great people guiding the process today and into the future. Jim Bulkley is the mayor of Columbus.

## Development

From E4

been such a hot item on our radar screen, and with everyone working on it, it finally just jelled." Columbus City Administrator Tara Vasicek noted her excitement regarding the anticipation of at least five substantial housing developments that are on the books or slated for real construction process this year. Three of these developments are benefiting from the city capitalizing on a state-funded Rural Workforce Housing Grant. The \$850,000 grant awarded in summer 2018 was the largest workforce housing grant distributed by the state Department of Economic Development. The grant, she said, requires the City of Columbus to match dollar for dollar to contribute to the city's economic growth. "That \$850,000 created about a \$1.9 million fund to build workforce housing in Columbus," she said. "From that, we asked for proposals from developers, people that wanted to build projects (to benefit) from that money." Seven projects applied, she said, with three being awarded grant funds. She noted that the funds are a low-interest loan, meaning the \$1.9 million fund is actually a revolving loan fund the city will be able to bank on for housing moving into the future. "And that's huge because there are just such few things that we can do," she said. "... And maybe in the next few years, the Legislature will do another Rural Workforce Housing, and we could add to our fund. It would be amazing if we had a nice pot of money to work with." Projects in the works that are benefiting from the grant include the Farmview, The Flats development and SERC LLC, developments. Workforce housing follows a strict set of parameters, Vasicek said. Rental properties must be valued at under \$250,000 to build each unit, and if it's owner-occupied, it must be under a sale price of \$275,000 per unit. The Farmview Development, which will be constructed near Columbus Municipal Airport, calls for 24 multi-family units and 31 single-family units. The project, spurred by Granville Custom Homes, is three-tiered, however, focus is now simply being placed on the first. In addition to benefiting from Rural Workforce Housing funds, the project is also using TIF dollars, Vasicek added. The Flats, a large-scale housing development being erected on the east side of Columbus near Menards, has applied for TIF funding - the city recently received the developers' TIF ap-



SAM PIMPER PHOTOS, THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM

A vacant plot of land sits next to the newly opened Bomgaars store along West 23rd Street. One 2-acre plot of land calls for a Hampton Inn hotel, and another 2-acre portion calls for a 74-unit apartment complex, which is benefiting from tax-increment financing.

### What is TIF?

TIF (Tax Increment Financing) is a funding mechanism that provides capital for developers and property owners to help get projects off the ground. The funding, which comes from the city, is then repaid over a period of up to 15 years using the increased tax revenue on the improved property. Locally, it previously has been used for projects such as Hobby Lobby, Slumberland, Ramada-Columbus, Hy-Vee and the Village Centre strip mall.



Granville Custom Homes, 2654 33rd Ave. The developer is working to erect 10 workforce housing units near Frontier Park along 14th Avenue.

lication. A public hearing regarding the project is scheduled for sometime in March, Vasicek said. "They still have several hoops they have to jump through," Vasicek said of the developers' ability to receive the financing. "The process is long, for TIF." Construction plans call for 180 total living units: 18 studio apartments, 84 one-bedroom apartments and 78 two-bedroom apartments. These are the projected unit numbers, she said, adding they are subject to adjustment. The SERC development, located near Centennial Elementary School, is currently going through the TIF approval and zoning process, Vasicek said. The project calls for 34 total housing units consisting of 16 townhomes. Other noteworthy developments include Granville Custom Homes purchasing land near Frontier Park along East 14th Avenue to erect 10 workforce housing units, and also the 74-unit interior apartment complex being built on the west side of town on a 2-acre plot of land directly by the newly opened Bomgaars store. The land housing the new 10

units of workforce housing was purchased from the city by Granville for approximately \$115,000. The project has been approved to benefit from TIF. "I believe that with some of the infrastructure stuff they've run into a couple of snags, but I believe that they will be starting in the next couple of months with digging and putting in some of the foundations," she said. Construction work is scheduled to start on the 74-unit apartment complex - also benefiting from TIF - in March. This project and The Flats development are two of the biggest game changers locally, she said. Housing growth in the community will not only benefit current residents, but it also serves as a way to pull new employees into Columbus to help fill the numerous vacant manufacturing positions seen all throughout the community. "It will truly change the game, which we have been working to do forever," outgoing Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce President K.C. Belitz said during a recently held Industrial Leaders Breakfast gathering. "So, we really think it will make a big difference for you all (business leaders) recruiting people who want to live here. "And that is a big deal because

if they (employees) are driving in from an hour and a half away, the odds are not as good that you (business leaders) will be able to keep them. And we know today that there are some people doing that (commuting) because of legitimate reasons because of the housing market. So, that is something that's going to change." Vasicek said that additional projects are in their infancy, but added that they are still a long way away from receiving council approval or moving forward with true progress. But, that isn't a real concern because so much headway is being made, especially in regard to providing families suitable living options at a reasonable rate. "The biggest success we have seen - or are hoping to see this year - is in multi-family (living)," she said. "Those two apartments - the 180 and the 74 (units), Columbus hasn't had a market-rate apartment complex built in over 25 years," Vasicek said. "Something that's not subsidized or federal housing, just somebody building an apartment and hoping that it will fill." Sam Pimper is the news editor of The Columbus Telegram. Reach him via email at sam.pimper@lee.net.

## Grant

From E4

Workforce Housing Investment Act) passed by a unanimous 49-0 vote in Nebraska's Legislature. LB5 18 funneled approximately \$7 million from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund into the RWHF. The RWHF, in turn, then funds regional rural workforce housing investment funds. These will be used to finance affordable housing development projects in communities within counties of less than 100,000 residents. LB 518 was meant to bolster rural communities' workforce recruitment efforts by helping them expand and improve their affordable housing stock, Ricketts and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development announced in a 2018 press release. Following a competitive application process that ended in March 2018, DED announced in May 2018 that 14 organizations were selected to receive RWHF grant awards, including NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska on behalf of Columbus (it prepared the community's application, handled the application process for developers and builders and is administering the funds).

The grant was for \$850,000, but several local entities helped meet the matching requirement to bring the revolving pool total to \$1,950,000, NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska Chief Executive Officer Roger Nadrchal told The Telegram in 2018. The City of Columbus put in \$750,000 from its economic development fund, while \$250,000 came from the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and \$60,000 from the Columbus Community Foundation. The Columbus United Way Endowment and Columbus Development Corporation each contributed \$20,000. "We're very excited to have another tool available to build additional housing units in Columbus," Nadrchal said in September 2018. "This has been a community partnership - a way to bring the entire community together, bring money together to show the community is behind the need for housing." Seven developers applied for the fund and were considered by a NeighborWorks advisory board made of local community leaders, who made a recommendation to the Board of Directors. The latter gave the final approval to 4J Capital LLC, SERC LLC and Granville Custom Homes Inc. Matt Lindberg is the managing editor of The Columbus Telegram. Reach him via email at matt.lindberg@lee.net.

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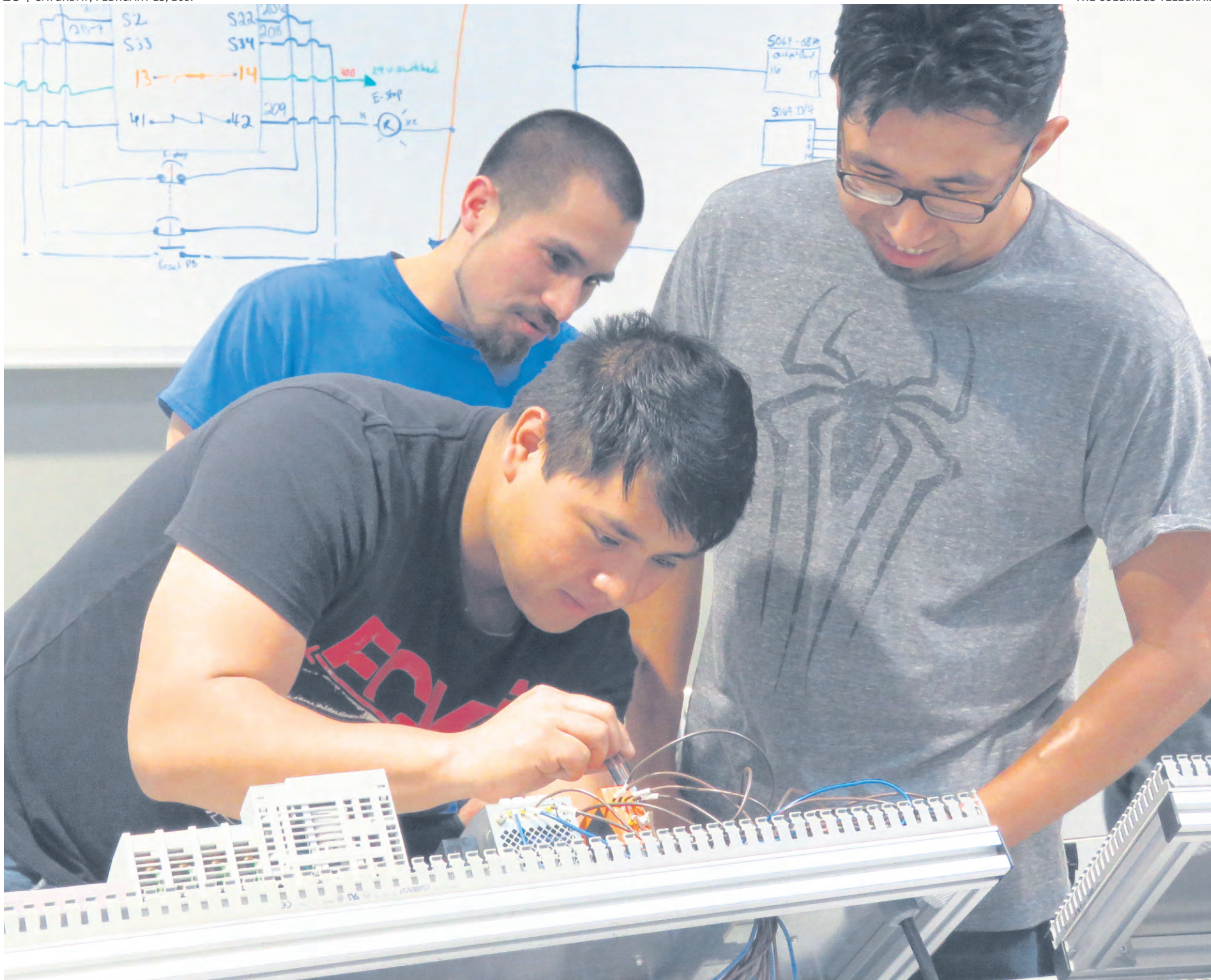
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Artist's rendering of the Anchor Activities Complex looking south from the high school. COURTESY PHOTO

# Field of Dreams

## Columbus High preparing to start fundraising campaign for baseball, softball fields

**NATE TENOPIR**  
The Columbus Telegram

**“I**f you build it, they will come.” Those immortal words were whispered to Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) one evening in the fields of his Southwest Iowa farm. Weeks later, Ray had transformed several acres of cropland into a baseball diamond.

In a journey to reconnect with his late father, Ray met pioneers of the sport, watched ghosts playfully tease one another during a game one evening and, all the while, left an impact on everyone who has seen the 1989 film “Field of Dreams.”

Columbus Public Schools administration may not have heard voices in the fields while looking over the construction of the new high school, but once that construction was complete, it was clear that it was, perhaps, not totally complete.

In a project expected to take three to five years, Columbus Public Schools is exploring the possibility of converting some of its new land, also former cornfields, into the school’s first baseball and softball fields.

Since the Discoverers first put together a varsity baseball program in 1999, CHS teams have shared time at Pawnee Park. Softball, which had its first season in 1995, constructs a temporary wall in the outfield of a recreational slow pitch field at Gerrard Park for home games.

If and when the project is complete, CHS is planning for two baseball fields, two softball fields, some potential park areas with splash pads and activities for kids as well as perhaps tennis courts.

Owning its own baseball and softball fields would be a tremendous benefit to both programs and a money maker for hosting weekend club tournaments.

“We’ve got a freshman team,



THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM FILE PHOTO

Players on the Columbus High baseball team stand for the National Anthem before the 2018 season opener against Norfolk in March 2018. Columbus Public Schools officials would eventually like to build a new sports complex that has fields for the high school’s baseball and softball programs

varsity team, reserve team and JV team and we’ve only got one field. Two fields make more sense to us.” Columbus Public Schools Superintendent Troy Loeffelholz said during a meeting on Jan. 24, referring to the current baseball situation.

“If we split, we’ve got to put JV, varsity at Pawnee, and the reserve and freshmen somewhere else, which means you take two coaches away. With this, you have all four coaches in one site.

“Selfishly, you want all the

kids together, and you want to be able to control your schedule and have the fields available when you needed them.”

Pawnee Park has served the community well for varsity, American Legion and club competition on a field that has been in play for more than 70 years. But because it’s the only regulation-size field, scheduling practice time and games, as well as organizing club tournaments, has been a struggle.

In most cases, the number of

home games is limited due to field availability.

The City of Columbus was in talks to construct a new field separate from Pawnee Park until the new high school building its own diamond became part of the conversation.

Initially, CPS officials considered adding the cost of new baseball and softball fields to the bond measure passed for the high school building. However, the school board wasn’t in favor of increasing the price tag of the

bond by almost 20 percent.

Instead, Columbus Public Schools, its foundation and the Columbus Baseball Association will now attempt to raise the funds privately and have the fields ready for play sometime within the next three to five years, though five years seems to be a more legitimate time frame.

“It’s conceptual at this point,” Loeffelholz said. “We did the concept with the help of the CBA so we could go out and help raise the funds.”

CPS, the school district’s foundation and the CBA enlisted the services of Lamp Rynearson, a civil engineering, landscaping architecture and construction administration firm that began in Omaha and has been in business for many years.

Lamp Rynearson did a study in the fall of 2017 that took roughly four months. The information returned included a price tag of around \$8 million for an “Anchor Activity Complex” that would cover 24 acres with the fields, press box, batting cages, dugouts and utility sheds.

The CBA provided the funds for the study.

“It would be a tremendous step forward for our baseball program,” CHS head coach Jimmy Johnson told The Telegram. “Practice space is difficult to come by in the spring, and having another field would create much more opportunity for our program, specifically for our players to improve.”

“It would also provide more options for games throughout the season. If it were turfed, there would be fewer rainouts and less practicing indoors. Another field would also be a huge step in hosting more tournaments for our high school and Legion teams. With just one field, it limits the options for tournaments. Hosting tournaments could be a boost to our whole community.”

The baseball fields are slated to have the exact dimensions of Hawks Field at Haymarket Park

Please see **FIELD**, Page E9

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**Field**

From E7

where Nebraska plays baseball while the softball fields are also designed with Husker specifications from Bowlin Stadium.

“(Lamp Rynearson) talked to the Columbus Baseball Association, they talked to our buildings and grounds, we’ve had conversations with the softball community, our baseball coaches and our softball coaches to provide some input what this could look like,” Loeffelholz said.

Building and owning its own baseball and softball field would make Columbus unique in the state. Most high school programs use diamonds operated and run by the local city or municipality.

“We never looked at it from the standpoint of what everybody else had,” Loeffelholz said. “We looked at it more selfishly as not having to share with the youth organizations or whoever to battle for our field, especially practice time.”

In order of ongoing development, however, the fields are behind the Kramer Education Center, and an early childhood development center, in terms of priority.

Additionally, there are no funds currently available or set aside for an Anchor Activities Complex. The school district would still need to consult the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure the land is right for water runoff or construct another pond to hold stormwater.

Then, dirt work would begin before any fences, walls or base paths can even be considered.

“It would change logistics as far as practice would be concerned. We would not need to travel across town, and we would have more ability to take advantage of locker rooms and weight rooms being on campus,” said Paul Graun, CHS softball coach.

“Also, with being on campus, we would be more connected to the student body. It would be easier for students in other activities after their practices to come out to the field and watch us play. That helps provide that connection to the program.

“When facilities are on campus, everyone takes a little more pride in things. We have seen it when we have played at Millard West, for example. You get 15 to 20 students out there. It makes a difference and completes that connection.”

The first step is to take the idea, in the form of brochures and pam-



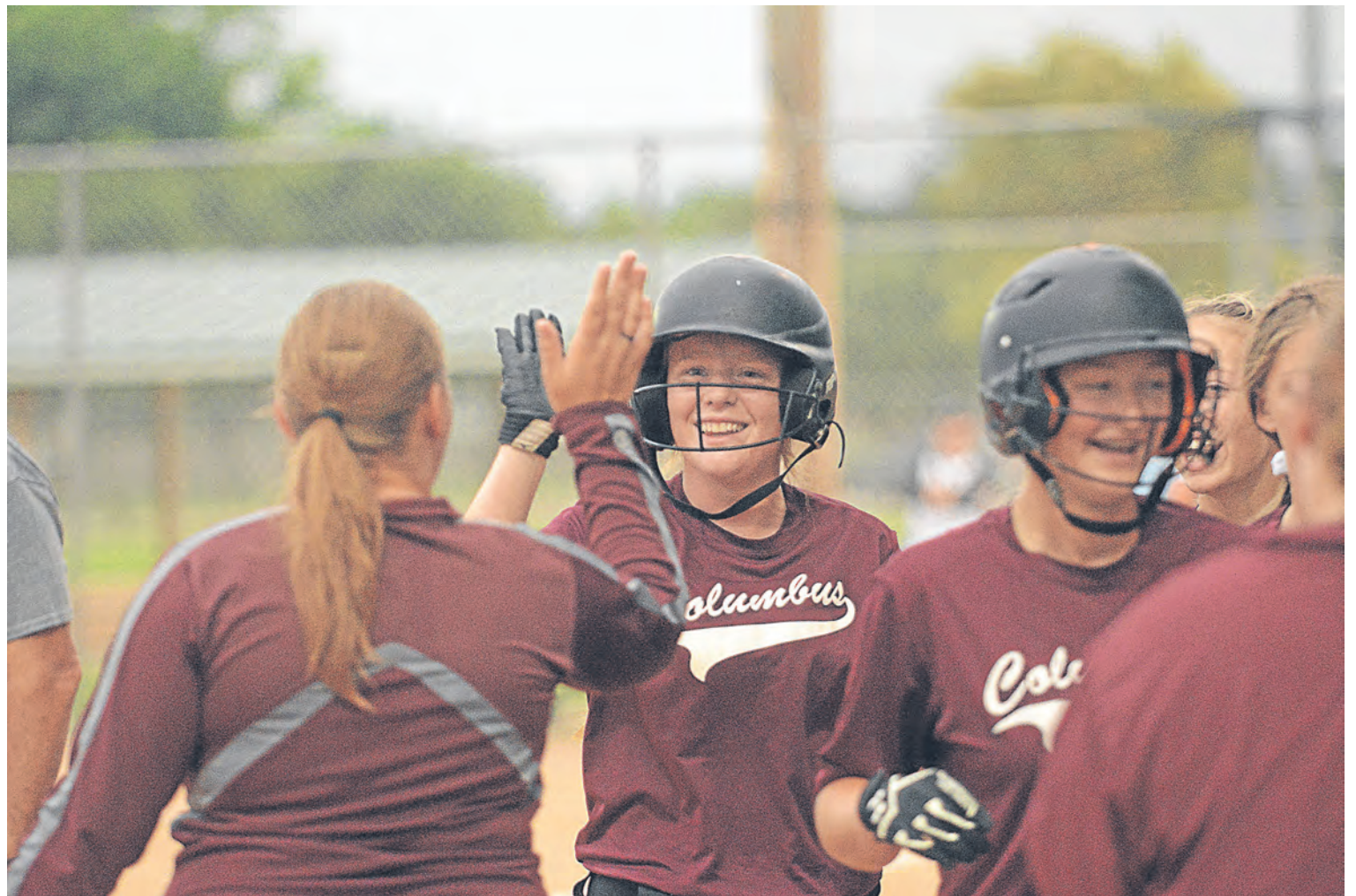
COURTESY PHOTO

Small scale version of the Anchor Complex design including two baseball fields, two softball fields, tennis courts and press box.



COURTESY PHOTO

Rendering of where the Anchor Complex would sit on the Columbus High School grounds at the corner of 33rd Avenue and 38th Street.



NATE TENOPIR, THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM FILE PHOTO

Kate Smith is greeted on her way back to the dugout after blasting a drive beyond the centerfield fence for a two-run home run in an August 2018 game. Columbus Public Schools hopes to eventually have a new complex that the softball and baseball teams at Columbus High School can utilize.

phlets put together by Lamp Rynearson, and make presentations in the community to raise the funding.

“If somebody comes in and says, ‘I really want a baseball field,’ then I say, ‘If you really want a baseball field, we need a softball field,’ and

they have the money to do so, we may be able to do something sooner than later,” Loeffelholz said. “But right now, there are no funds available or put aside for this project.”

A hefty donation would be welcome, like

the program in Palmer received, though that amount at \$1.5 million would cover less than half the cost.

“Until the time that happens, we’re going to have to be slow and steady and raise the funds as we can,” Loeffelholz said. “We’re not

even to the start of the campaign. We’re starting to mobilize for the campaign. Once we know what the campaign looks like, we’ll go 100 percent.”

Nate Tenopir is the sports editor.

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COURTESY, B-D CONSTRUCTION AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

An architectural rendering of what the under construction Columbus Fire Department will look like when it opens its doors in 2020 on three parcels of land just north of Howard Boulevard/U.S. Highway 81 between 46th and 47th avenues.



COURTESY, B-D CONSTRUCTION AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

An architectural rendering of what the new-and-improved Columbus Police Department will look like when construction is complete on the new facility, which is located at the corner of 14th Street and 23rd Avenue in the downtown district.

# LAW & FIRE: PSP

## PUBLIC SAFETY PROJECTS PUSHING FORWARD

MATT LINDBERG  
The Columbus Telegram

About nine months after Columbus voters approved up to a \$16 million bond to fund the construction of new police and fire stations, work on both is well underway and progressing nicely.

"These are generational type structures, so it's nice to be part of those," said B-D Construction Treasurer/Project Manager Bryan Kearney, who is leading the efforts on the fire station portion of the city's Public Safety Projects. "They are something we will be able to drive by our whole lives and see those structures completed for the next generation to come."

The city commissioned local entity B-D for both facilities' construction, which began in fall 2018. Both remain on schedule and budget, according to City Administrator Tara Vasicek, and will be the culmination of years of work when they officially open.

In 2014, discussion began about possibly constructing a joint facility at the old Walmart site along 23rd Street, the old Columbus Middle School or on multiple lots in the downtown district. Officials pivoted the idea for a joint location to two separate facilities that would meet fire and police's priorities of response time and a downtown location, respectively.

"Originally looking at a joint facility for both police and fire, a parcel of land required to house both was hard to find," Columbus Mayor Jim Bulkeley recalled in mid-February of the process. "It was



THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM FILE PHOTO

A sign urges local voters to go to the polls in May to cast a ballot in the \$16 million city bond issue to fund new fire and police stations. The bond issue passed during the primary election and both projects are currently underway.

determined that separate locations could better serve the needs of both."

Then, in January 2018, the Columbus City Council approved a two-year option-to-purchase agreement for three parcels of land just north of Howard Boulevard/U.S. Highway 81 between 46th and 47th avenues for building a new fire station. The station is on the west end of Columbus, where CFD receives a greater percentage of its calls.

Fast forward to May 2018, the bond is-

sue was passed by voters with ease, 2,755 votes (75.81 percent) to 879 (24.19 percent), paving the way for both projects to get started. It called for building the two separate sites, as well as the demolition costs of the old fire station and the former Gene Steffy building where the police station will be. The price tags are \$135,000 to demolish the existing fire station at 1459 26th Ave. and \$75,000 to raze the old Steffy showroom at 2310 14th St.

"The public voted a resounding yes to the plan and showed great confidence in us being good stewards of the tax dollars," Bulkeley said in mid-February while reflecting back on the process. "We soon will have state-of-the-art facilities to house our first responders. These facilities will serve Columbus for generations to come."

Officials also plan to eventually add living quarters to the C.W. Louis Fire Station on the city's southeast side along Eighth Street so some staff could be based there. That station, along Eighth Street, is currently an unmanned facility.

"I thought 65 percent, but it turned out to be 75 percent," Columbus Fire Chief Dan Miller said right after the bond passed, adding he was happy the public had faith in the need for the project proposal city officials put before the voters. "I was pleased the public believes what we're doing is the right thing."

Since commencing in fall 2018, those driving by have seen construction on both facilities start from the bottom up. Both sites presently feature a semblance of what the final state-of-the-art facilities will look like when completed. Tentatively by spring 2020, both city departments will be operating out of their new digs.

"We are excited with being able to move forward with our new police and fire facilities. After years of discussing the needs we came to the voters with a plan," Bulkeley said in mid-February. "The plan was well laid out, showed the need and showed how it would be financed. Without a tax increase!"

These are their stories ...



COURTESY PHOTO, B-D CONSTRUCTION

A view from above the site of the new Columbus Police Station, which is currently under construction.



MATT LINDBERG, THE COLUMBUS TELEGRAM

B-D employees and various contractors were hard at work on site at what will become the Columbus Fire Department on Feb. 13.

## Columbus Police eye move at end of year

New facility will be just over 26,300 square feet

MATT LINDBERG  
The Columbus Telegram

The Columbus Police Department's 2019 will be busy. It has already added back a second school resource officer position and is in the process of finalizing its new K-9 unit. But its biggest change will come when officers make the jump from the department's present location at 2419 14th St. down the block to the corner of 14th Street and 23rd Avenue, the former home of Gene Steffy Ford.

Columbus Police Chief Charles Sherer said he is hoping that move will come on about Nov. 1 of this year, a few weeks after construction is tentatively slated to be complete.

"I think it was important we stayed downtown; I think we're an anchor to the downtown area and the business commu-

nity, and I wanted to maintain that presence," Sherer said, noting he was thankful the city already had the land in its possession in anticipation of building a new library/cultural arts center that voters rejected previously. "I think it gives us a central location."

That downtown location also just made good sense for his staff, which boasts about 50 positions in all. The CPD features 36 sworn officers and eight non-sworn officers (two-and-a-half animal control positions, a part-time maintenance role, two clerks and three community service technicians.) Dispatchers will be moving to the new combined facility with Platte County, which is a separate project. CPD clerks, he noted, do a lot of work in the

Please see POLICE, Page E11

## Columbus Fire eager for move west

Chief says new station will help firefighters and community

MATT LINDBERG  
The Columbus Telegram

Columbus Fire Chief Dan Miller doesn't have to tell you to figure out the obvious about his department's current downtown location.

"We've outgrown the current station," Miller said.

Miller and his team of 15 career firefighters and rescue personnel and about five dozen volunteers deal with cramped quarters at 1459 26th Ave. in the downtown district, at least until the more spacious location on the west end is ready in spring 2020. The city and B-D are working across town on the development of the new fire station on three parcels of land just north of Howard Boulevard/U.S. Highway 81 between 46th and 47th avenues.

The new nearly 25,000-square-foot

facility will help in a variety of ways, specifically safety and efficiency.

"We have five apparatus bays right now, but they're all double-stacked. So you back one truck in right in front of the other and they're bumper-to-bumper," Miller said. "And they're very narrow."

The new station calls for eight bays, four of which will be drive-through so that trucks won't have to be backed in. Effectively, that turns eight bays into 12, helping keep response times quick.

"That makes it a little safer, plus gives you the opportunity to use those back bay doors as exit routes. We can essentially get twice the bang for the buck by having apparatus respond out of both sides of the station," Miller said.

Please see FIRE, Page E11

## Police

From E10

downtown area, such as at the Platte County Courthouse.

Construction on the new police station is going smoothly.

It's going really well and on schedule," said B-D Vice President/Project Manager Chris Langan, who is the lead on the new 26,321-square-foot police station. "We don't see any problems meeting the expected completion dates."

In early February, B-D workers were progressing on the second level of the two-level station.

"The metal stud framing is ongoing, and closing in the building will happen in the spring," Langan said. "You'll start to see more brick and aluminum glass storefronts by mid-summer."

The station, when complete, should be immaculate. Sherer said while out of town at a conference he came across Police Facility Design Group, an architectural firm based out of Kansas City, Missouri, that specializes in designing police stations all over the country. The group was ultimately selected to design the station in Columbus, working with Sherer and other local officials to create the look of the state-of-the-art facility, while B-D is lead on construction.

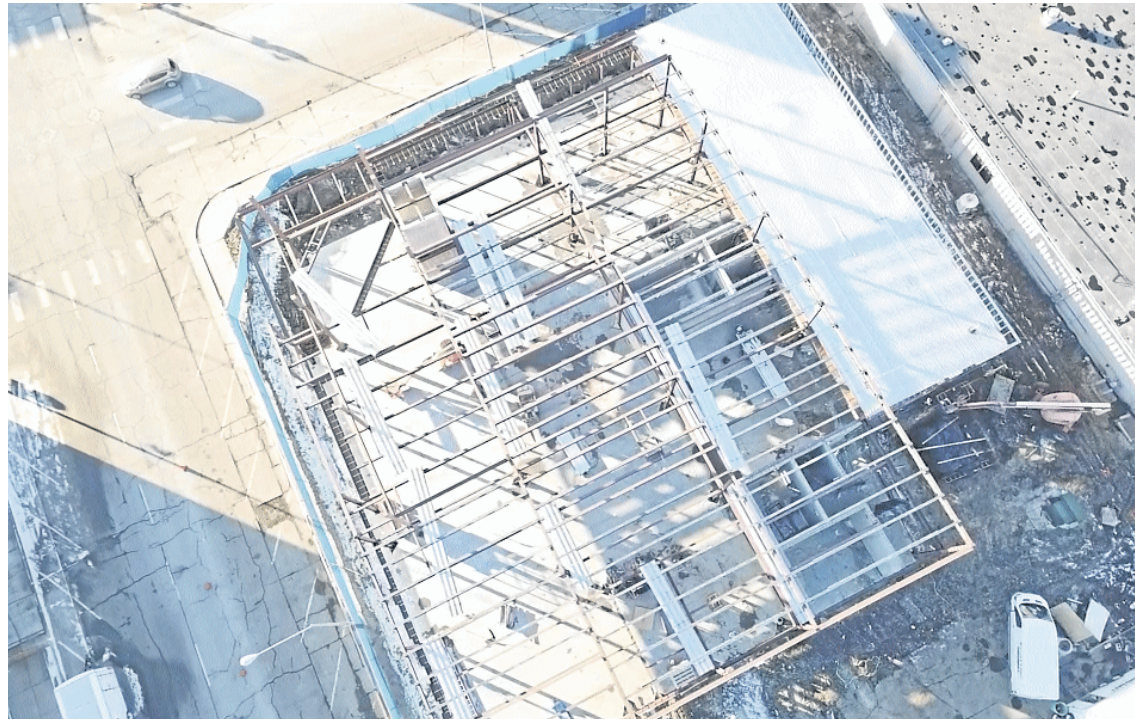
"I'm really looking forward to being in there. I think we're going to be much more effective in that facility," Sherer said.

The first floor will boast plenty of room for evidence property, a much-needed and welcome change for the department.

"It will be up-to-date evidence processing," Sherer said. "Evidence right now is distributed to three different locations. In the new police department, we'll have one evidence property room. So evidence processing is going to be much better. Officers will have a better place to organize their work, their reports."

The first floor will also feature a roomier squad room and the detention portion with enhanced holding cells, which will be right off a private heated area in the back of the building where officers will be able to park.

On a morning in mid-February, Langan was walking around the first floor as B-D employees were



A view looking directly down at the building presently under construction in downtown Columbus that will be the home of the city police department when complete.



A view of where holding cells will be constructed at the site of the new Columbus Police Department. Just outside of the building, where the dirt can be seen, an exterior dog run will go in for CPD's K-9 unit.

working in various spaces, noting the masonry work in the holding cell area was complete.

Langan said just outside the holding cells will be a modest exterior dog run - approximately 4-feet-wide-by-40-feet-long that will give the CPD's dog some space for exercise once part of the force.

The first floor will also have room for animal control (the first time CPD's animal control unit will be in the same building), as well as for patrol officers.

During a tour of the site, Langan made a point to show off space just above the building's eventual

entryway that was made specifically for a bronze sculpture that will feature a Columbus Police badge. The sculpture will rest prominently above the main entrance and be visible to all people passing by.

"That's going to sit on the ledge and everything will be all glass in the entryway," he said.

Langan didn't hold back his enthusiasm for construction of the new police facility, noting he was appreciative of the city for bringing on B-D and other local subcontractors (approximately 90 percent, he said) to bring it to life.

"I think it's great. It shows the

COURTESY PHOTO, B-D CONSTRUCTION



Columbus Police Department Chief Charles Sherer poses for a photo on a recent day in front of a plaque honoring all former CPD chiefs. The chief and the other members of his department are eager to move down the block to the new facility once it is complete.

city cares about trying to keep the community busy," he said. "We've built relationships with the chief, who has been great. He wants to be involved as much as possible. But this is just good for the community as well to have local companies involved."

The second level of the station will feature the support division of the department, investigators, the chief's office and space for his ad-

## Under one roof

The Consolidated Communications Center Interlocal Cooperation Agreement was approved by the Columbus City Council and the Platte County Board of Supervisors in 2018 after being discussed for several years.

County Supervisor James Scow, who has been on the local E-911 Technical Committee for eight years, had said in 2018 that the agreement is a great example of how the city and county can work together toward a unified goal, noting it can be used as a reference for future projects.

The new E-911 Joint Communication Center is in the administration building of the Columbus Municipal Airport, 1308 Bill Babka Drive. The center calls for all dispatch coordinators to work under one roof in the building currently being refurbished and revamped on site.

Scow had said the location makes sense because the city already owns the building, adding the city would hire a director to oversee the operations at the new center.

Although the city will be providing the building, Scow said, the county will be supplying the equipment.

Columbus Mayor Jim Bulkley praised the new center's progress during his State of the City address earlier this year.

ministrative assistants, as well as a multiuse room for training and community events. Additionally, there will be a gym with separate male and female locker rooms for officers to train and keep in shape.

"This new station is giving us the opportunity to spread our wings a little bit. Our officers will not be confined to such a small area," Sherer said, noting the new station is being built with some enhanced features so that it can be used for decades beyond his tenure. "I think we've filled (our current station) to capacity. We're growing beyond its walls, so this station is going to help provide us the space we need because of that obvious growth."

Matt Lindberg is the managing editor of The Columbus Telegram. Reach him via email at matt.lindberg@lee.net.

## Fire

From E10

Another major highlight of the new building is its community room, which the chief said will enable his department to host large fire seminars with other area agencies and other functions.

But the most critical component of the new station is its location. The new facility works well for trucks as it will be built right off a frontage road that provides easy access to the highway so officials can get in and out with ease.

"It's a really nice site," Miller said, noting it makes sense because of the number of calls in the northwest part of the district CFD responds to regularly. "But more importantly, our time studies showed we could keep response times low. That and the Charlie Lewis Fire Station on the south part of the town will be a great combination as the city grows to keep our response times low."

The C.W. Louis Fire Station, located on the city's southeast side along Eighth Street, would serve as a place for additional fire staff to house, allowing for more equal dispersal of fire resources around town. Currently, Miller said, the unmanned building is used primarily to house equipment that is then staffed by volunteer firefighters upon notification of a fire.

"The timeline and budget for the necessary improvements to the Charlie Lewis Fire Station are not finalized yet. These items will be determined in the next budget year. It's a separate project," Miller said, noting no contractor has been designated and the project will have to go through complete design, approval and bidding processes when the time comes.

Construction on the two-level fire station (the second floor will be for storage and dorms for overnight employees) is going slowly but surely.



Columbus Fire Chief Dan Miller on an August 2018 morning poses for a photo outside the current fire station in the downtown area. He said he and his team are eager to move into the new facility next year.



The downtown fire station only has five apparatus bays right now, and they're all double-stacked. Columbus Fire Chief Dan Miller said this is a real pain for firefighters, but it won't be an issue once the department moves to its new facility in 2020.

"We're getting along," said B-D Project Manager Bryan Kearney, who is the lead on the fire station project for B-D. "It's always tough this time of year with the weather, but we're excited to get back out there."

Foundation work got underway in September, and since then, site utilities and earthwork have been completed. The structural steel shell should mostly be completed at some point this month, with the masonry walls soon to follow, according to Kearney.

"We're excited to be part of the project and we're happy the city chose us and

put their faith in us to bring these projects to fruition," Kearney said. "These are important facilities for the city going forward, so we're proud to be part of them."

With a little over a year to go, Miller said he is counting down the days to relocating his department.

"I'm really looking forward to being in there," he said. "I think we're going to be much more effective in that facility."

Matt Lindberg is the managing editor of The Columbus Telegram. Reach him via email at matt.lindberg@lee.net.



Construction workers were busy on a November 2018 afternoon with efforts on the new fire department located just north of U.S. Highway 81 between 46th and 47th avenues.

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