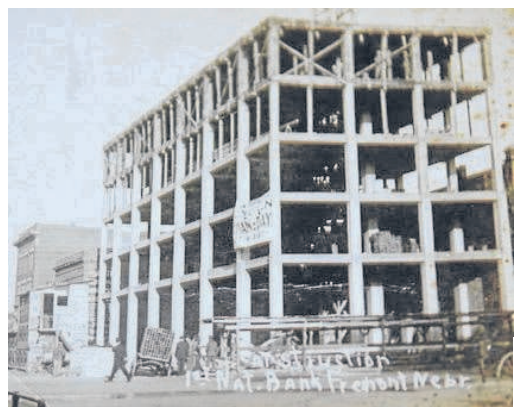


PROGRESS 2018



Bright future for Historic Downtown

505 Building next in line to come back alive in Fremont’s hub

COLIN LARSON
Fremont Tribune

Throughout 2017, several historic buildings in Downtown Fremont came back to life as the May Brothers Building became home to Milady Coffeehouse, 1881 Pint Room, and The Pioneer Theatre and the old Schweser’s Building became the new home of Fia+Belle.

More retail, entertainment and dining opportunities fill those two new businesses, but there is another project taking shape. Plans are underway to renovate the long vacant 505 Building into a boutique hotel, event space and two new restaurants in the coming years.

“I am very excited on the 505 project because it is such a big viable building in the heart of downtown that has sat empty for far too long,” said Bill Perry, who is heading up the 505 project. “To bring in a 40-room hotel and a couple restaurants, think how many people that will bring in during the lunch hour, the dinner hour, and to come and stay and then walk and shop the stores of downtown Fremont.”

Perry, who owns and renovated the Kollmeyer Passageway, has been working with 505 Building owner Jim Barta during the past year or so to redevelop the building into the 505 Boutique Hotel.

“Jim approached me about a year ago because he liked what I had done with the Kollmeyer Passageway, liked my style and my quality of tenants, liked what I did for downtown Fremont, and it is about time we do something with the 505 Building,” Perry said.

According to Perry, the 505 Boutique Hotel will include between 38 and 42 rooms along with an Italian restaurant on the main floor and a more casual restaurant and venue in the basement with “burgers, beer and live music.”

“We want a higher-end Italian restaurant on the main floor with the hotel lobby and a nice cocktail lounge, utilizing the original bank interior for that facility,” he said. “For the basement, we will be adding some access and egress for fire code and we want to put more of a bar, live music type restaurant down there.”

Along with the boutique hotel and two restaurants, Perry is also planning an event space that will be located on the roof of the historic building.



COURTESY MAY MUSEUM

Early photo of the First National Bank building at 505 North Main Street.



COURTESY MAY MUSEUM

Construction of the First National Bank building at 505 North Main Street began in 1912.

“Our goal is to do a small private event room enclosed in glass with an outdoor patio up on the roof. That is our plan,” he said. “If we do the rooftop event space, it will be a 12-month, all-season glass enclosure with an outdoor patio to use on nice days, to go up and have a glass of wine or whatever.”

According to Perry, blueprints for the project have already been

drawn up and he has already received quotes and pricing to complete the renovation. Currently, he is courting boutique hotel management companies to manage the hotel on a day-to-day basis.

Perry estimates that the project will be completed within two years.

“We need about 60 days to do demolition, we need about 15

Downtown Fremont Timeline

- 1868:** May Brothers Grocery opens at Sixth and Park Avenue.

1888: City Hall built at Fourth Street and Park Avenue.

1912: Construction begins on 505 Building.

1914: Thad Quinn (Schweser’s) Building is built.

1939: Schweser’s purchases Thad Quinn Building and opens store.

1970: Downtown Improvement District (DID) established.

1999: Blondie’s Underground Lounge opens in basement of 505 Building.

2001: Blondie’s, Nick’s Main Street Grill close at 505 Building.

2012: Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, P.C. created Downtown Revitalization Plan for City of Fremont.
- 2014:** Glenn Ellis purchases May Brothers Building, opens Fremont Creative Collective.

2015: Schweser’s announces it is closing all locations, including store in downtown Fremont.

2016: City Council approves ordinance to establish a downtown Business Improvement District (BID).

May 13, 2017: Milady Coffeehouse opens in May Brothers Building.

June 2017: Historic Downtown Fremont receives national designation as accredited Main Street America program from National Main Street Center.

Oct. 24, 2017: Fia+Belle officially opens store in Schweser’s Building.

months of construction is what I am being told, and we need to get a (hotel) management company in as well,” he said.

Perry said he already has potential restaurants nailed down with tenants for the Italian restaurant and the basement restaurant ready to sign paperwork. He has

also narrowed his hotel management company search down to two or three possible candidates.

“Essentially I am interviewing hotel management companies to come in and manage the hotel property. We will not be partners

Please see **DOWNTOWN**, Page C4

Developments look to fill housing need

Costco plant, housing study spur need for new homes

COLIN LARSON
Fremont Tribune

As economic development continues to grow the Fremont area, with new businesses bringing life to the 23rd street corridor and the Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry processing plant underway, there has come a need for more housing in the community.

In 2017, results from a county-wide housing study completed by Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C., highlighted the housing needs throughout the county and city during the next five years.

Countywide, the study calls for 1,508 new homes to be built — 786 owner-owned and 722 rental property. In Fremont, the total number of properties needed according to the study is 1,194 — 560 owner-owned and 634 rentals.

At a meeting held in late 2017, Mayor Scott Getzschman said the total amount of proposed Dodge County housing additions would bring \$319 million back to the county.

“The information revealed the need for more housing with or without the Costco Processing facility,” Getzschman said in his State of the City address. “That being said, we currently have three developments locally on top of our existing developments.”

Those three developments include: SunRidge Place, Duke Estates and Gallery 23 East, which have been making headway toward providing some of the housing needed throughout Fremont during the next few years.

The Gallery 23 East develop-

ment on the southeast corner of U.S. Highway 275 and U.S. Highway 30 broke ground in September 2017 and recently became Dodge County SID 8.

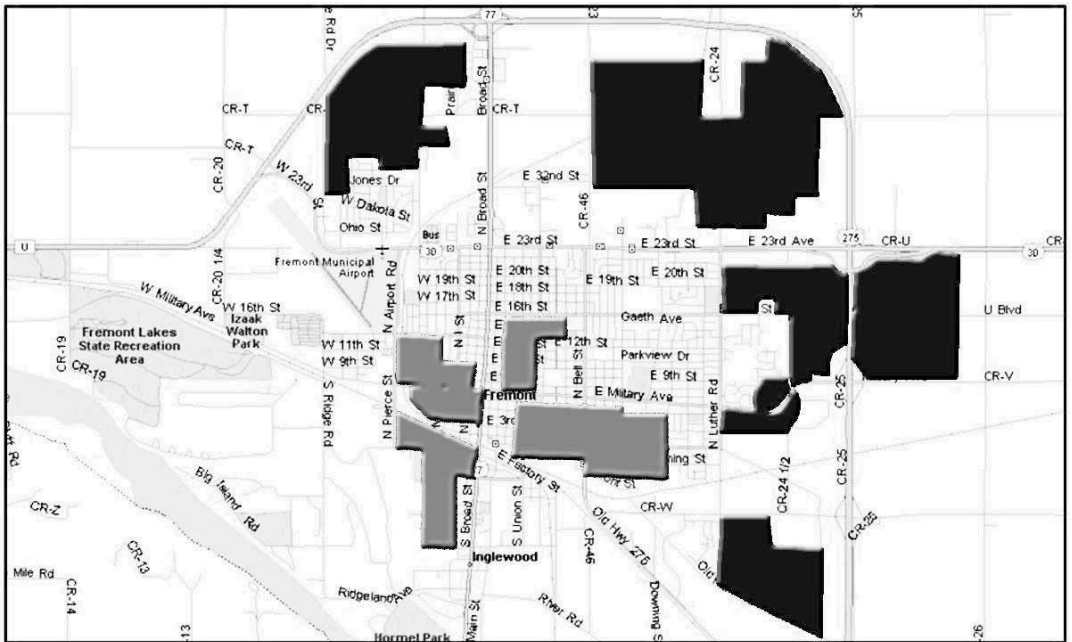
The developers of Gallery 23 East, which is owned by Cosen-tino Holdings, LLC., plan for the development to include approximately 39.5 acres (112 lots) for single family residences; 7.4 acres (48 lots) for duplex construction; 11.6 acres for multi-family residential (220 units) and 46.5 acres for approximately 480,000 square feet of various commercial uses.

According to Gary Kuklin, associate broker with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Ambassador Real Estate, the development team is making a big push to get apartments built at the site in a time frame that coincides with the completion of the Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry facilities.

“We are going to be moving forward very soon on trying to get some letters of intent in on the apartments, we want to start building those as soon as possible,” he said. “With Costco building, we want to try to have these things in place so that they are there for people to move in to when they need them.”

A wide array of price ranges will make Gallery 23 East accessible for many people, Mike Cosen-tino said during a previous interview with the Tribune. In addition, the property is home to a centrally located 14-acre body of water, being named Lake Galleria.

According to Kuklin, about 80 percent of grading to the property was completed in late 2017 and the development should start taking shape once the weather turns in the spring.



COURTESY IMAGE

Results from a housing study completed by Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C., in 2017 highlighted the housing needs throughout the county and city during the next five years. The study highlighted housing redevelopment areas (dark gray) and new housing development areas (black).

Other potential developments making waves include the proposed Duke Estates housing development and the SunRidge Place housing development, which are both in the zoning phases of development.

All that has taken place with the proposed Duke Estates development is a zoning change for the approximately 89.5 acres at 1045 W. South St., to move from RR Rural Residential and R-2 Moderate-Density Residential to PD Planned.

The zoning change was quite controversial, with the Fremont City Council ultimately going against the Planning Commission’s initial recommendation of not re-zoning the area.

Duke Estates’ development plan calls for a mixture of single-family residential housing, attached single-family residential, townhouses and cottage single-family residential homes ranging in price from \$145,000 to \$200,000.

Opponents of the development have spoken about numerous issues relating to the project including: more pressure on sewers, flooding concerns due to the area being in the floodplain and the property needing to be elevated with fill, as well as heavy traffic flow in and out of an area with already narrow roads and numerous children walking to and from Washington Elementary School.

For the project to continue moving forward, property owner Derek Kovick will have to continue doing his due-diligence in terms of coming up with constructive solutions to problems addressed, the Council said.

The proposed SunRidge housing development, which is being developed by Don Peterson & Associates, is also in the zoning phase.

“We are going through the permitting process with the city and the preliminary plat has been accepted and we are going through the zoning changes,” Developer Marlin Brabec said.

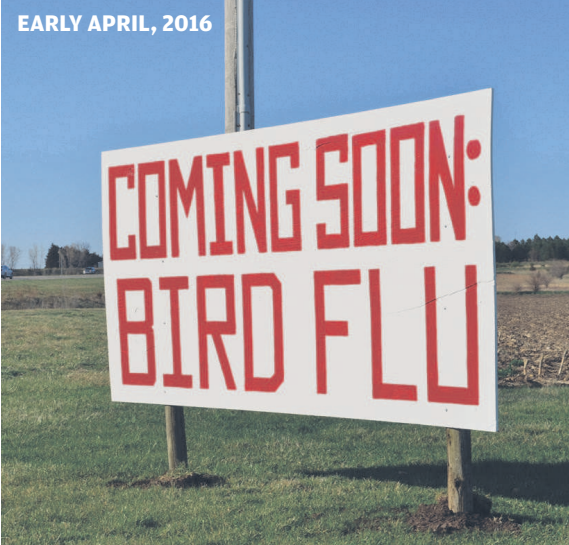
The multi-use development

Please see **HOUSING**, Page C5



Costco timeline

- 2016
- EARLY APRIL, 2016: Murmurs begin about little-known project called Project Rawhide, drawing concern and excitement from citizens.
- APRIL 15, 2016: Announced that company's behind "Project Rawhide" is Costco Wholesale and Lincoln Premium Poultry.
- LATE MAY 2016: Following decision to not locate a fully-integrated poultry operation on a tract of land located north of Fremont and just two miles west of Nickerson, and City of Fremont annexes 414 acres of land south of Fremont, known as the Hills Farm area.
- 2017
- MARCH 2017: Costco closes on 414 acre tract finalizing purchase.
- MAY 2017: Costco corporate offices give greenlight for construction to begin on site.
- LATE JUNE, 2017: Groundbreaking ceremony occurs onsite.
- JULY 2017: Citizens raise concerns after learning that the three industrial waste lagoons will be moved from original on-site location to an approximately 40-acre plot of land south of Fremont near the city's Wastewater Treatment Facility.
- 2018
- LATE AUGUST, 2017: City of Fremont gets approval from City Council to use eminent domain - if necessary - to acquire property for industrial waste lagoon site.
- LATE SEPTEMBER, 2017: Dodge County Board of Supervisors gives first conditional use permit to Hooper farming family to erect pullet barns on property after receiving perfect score on Nebraska Livestock Siting Assessment Matrix.
- 2019
- EARLY NOVEMBER, 2017: Agreement is made for land purchase regarding industrial waste lagoons and in late December, property purchase finalized for lump sum of \$880,000.
- DECEMBER, 2017: A 10-day concrete pour happens on-site to build a 160-foot-tall feed mill. Street systems and parking lots also taking shape.
- JUNE, 2019: The goal date for Costco/LPP processing facility to open.



Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry facility has eyes set on summer 2019

BY SAM PIMPER
Fremont Tribune

The chicken processing facility poised to open in south Fremont in 2019 is far from your run-of-the-mill poultry plant, in fact, it is the first of its kind designed specifically by Costco Wholesale and Lincoln Premium Poultry to produce its own, in-house chicken products.

Using state-of-the-art technology, within one year following its projected June 2019 opening, approximately 2 million chickens will be processed weekly inside of the main facility, which will sit upon approximately 100 acres of the 414-acre site, said Jessica Kolterman, who handles external affairs for Lincoln Premium Poultry.

The operation will send millions of birds across the western part of the United States, as well as Alaska and Hawaii, she said. Some time ago, Costco Wholesale started analyzing its chicken products and determined that some shifts needed to happen moving forward.

"Costco started looking at their product several years ago and saying, 'What can we do to make sure we have the amount of product we need, at the quality we want with all the specifications we want,'" Kolterman said. "And after several years of analysis, decided that one of the ways they could have a very strong probability of getting exactly what they wanted with their product was to develop that product themselves. So this is that strategy coming to fruition. They have never developed a project specifically like this previously."

Prior to working for Lincoln Premium Poultry, Kolterman came to Dodge County in late 2015 on a special assignment through the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to communicate to area residents about a possible large-scale project coming to the area – it was not known Costco was the company at the time – that would provide farming families a way to diversify their income streams through an animal growing operation. Essentially, it was an effort to gauge the interest of possible stakeholders.

Kolterman said that the interest was there from farming families right out of the gate.

"The response that came back from farmers around the region was overwhelming. With the people who signed up to stay engaged in the process we had over 300 percent of what we would



COURTESY JESSICA KOLTERMAN

In November and December 2017, the 160-foot feed mill was erected on the property of the Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry processing facility.

have needed from growers based off of that initial conversation," Kolterman said.

Currently, approximately 80 farming families are going through the process of receiving conditional use permits enabling them to erect poultry barns on their property. To be eligible for a permit, applicants must score at least 75 out of 100 points on the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's Livestock Siting Assessment Matrix, and meet several other specifications through the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

In total, there will be a need for around 120 farming families from a 13 county, 60-mile radius, to have pullet, hen house and

broiler barns, which will take the chickens through the growth process until they reach approximately 6 1/4 and are ready to be harvested inside of the approximately 380,000-square-foot facility, which is a key component of the approximately \$275 million project. Of that dollar amount, approximately \$18 million is eligible for use of tax-increment financing.

In 2016, Lincoln Premium Poultry was created specifically for the Costco Wholesale project. Kolterman started working for Lincoln Premium Poultry in September 2016.

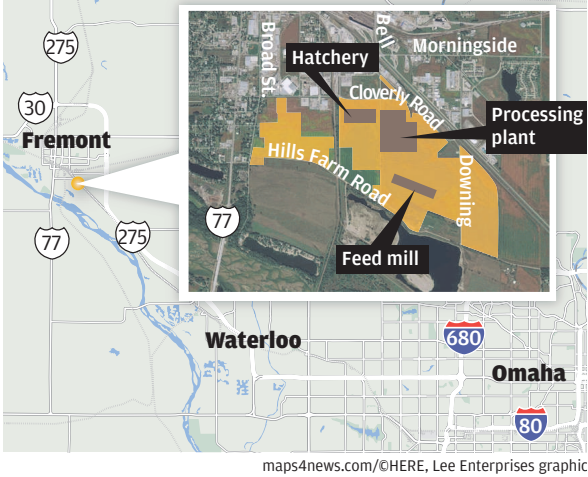
"This company, Lincoln Premium Poultry, is a company that was developed for Costco, in collabora-

tion with Costco," she said. "This company was created specifically to execute this strategy that Costco developed. So when people ask us, 'Where can we go and buy your chicken currently,' the answer is you can't."

While the processing facility is moving Costco toward its goal of creating its own optimal product, much of its chicken nationally will still come from other chicken providers.

"Previously they've gotten them (Chickens) from existing companies," she said. "Like from Fosters, Perdue, Pilgrims ... And I'm not positive about what all integrators they've gotten them from previously, but I do know those are exam-

Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry



ples of integrators ... This is a concept that has not been done previously."

Nebraska – and specifically Dodge County and Fremont – was one of four sites that Costco Wholesale looked at to erect the Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry processing facility. The ultimate decision was based off of four main components: access to food supply, sufficient utilities, workforce and overall community interest.

In terms of food supply, there is a need for quality corn and soybeans to feed the birds, and not having to transport the product in from out of state saves expenses and ultimately provides a better product.

Utilities are also vital, because the facility will use thousands of gallons of water weekly to process birds, and to keep birds cool in the barns through the use of Cool Cell Technology, Kolterman said.

Of course, having access

to a solid labor force was a vital part of the final decision to build in Nebraska.

"The labor studies completed as part of the area analysis showed that there are adequate numbers of people who are underemployed or unemployed," she said. "We will have about 800-1,000 workers, and it also played a role that Fremont is in close proximity to major urban areas (Omaha and Lincoln).

Perhaps most importantly, she said, Costco wanted to see interest and excitement from growers, and that level of passion and excitement was there immediately.

Gary Clark, executive director of the Greater Fremont Development Council, said that opportunities to bring in an operation like the Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry facility don't happen too often.

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The fifth floor of the 505 Building in Downtown Fremont currently features a long hallway of offices from years past. The historic building is being redeveloped to include a boutique hotel and several restaurants. The top four floors of the building will house 38 to 42 hotel rooms.

Downtown

From C2

or anything like that, but just to come in and manage the hotel because both Jim and I know nothing about managing a hotel,” he said. As demolition and construction begins to take shape at the 505 Building, Perry says the plan is to utilize as many of the historical elements that remain at the location as possible. “We’ll keep the crown molding and decorative molding on the first floor, the wrought iron staircases, the mezzanine level is going to be a private dining area, and the elevator will be refurbished,” he said. “All of the marble and woodwork and doors that we can utilize in the hotel we do plan on utilizing into the facade of the building.” Although the plan is to utilize any original elements that still remain in the century old building, Perry says those elements will have to be incorporated into a more modern style throughout the building due to previous changes to the interior floors. “The basement and the main floor are pretty much intact the way it was, because everybody asks if we are going historical, and to be quite honest we can’t,” he said. “It’s not going to be feasible because floors two, three, and four are gutted from the previous owner. We are going to utilize everything that we still have

access to, but unfortunately the previous owner did quite a bit of damage to the historic nature of the building.” Perry’s hopes for the new 505 Boutique Hotel is that it will continue to revitalize downtown Fremont and bring something completely unique to the community. “The more people you can bring downtown to support the businesses that are down there, you get a unique atmosphere,” he said. “It is not a cement block building on the highway, it is a brick structure with unique ceilings and floors and you can have a unique dining experience or shopping experience in and old structure. I just think that is good for all of Fremont whether you live out on the highway or downtown and it’s good for the surrounding communities.” Perry sees the future 505 Boutique Hotel as another big step in revitalizing the area along with redevelopment efforts at the May Brothers Building and the old Schweser’s Building that are all key to the survival and success of Downtown Fremont. “Look what is going on..., just so much more is happening — re-utilizing and revitalizing such unique historic buildings I think is key,” he said. “I think a downtown is key to a community’s culture, heart and soul. And if the downtown is dilapidated and empty, well, so is the community’s soul I think.”



A wrought iron staircase inside the 505 Building in Downtown Fremont. The ornate staircase will be refurbished as part of a redevelopment effort to turn the building into a boutique hotel.



COLIN LARSON PHOTOS / FREMONT TRIBUNE

Top photo: Doors stacked on the first floor of the 505 Building. The doors are planned to be reused in the historic structure as part of a redevelopment effort to turn the building into a boutique hotel with two restaurants and a rooftop event space. **Left photo:** A view from the mezzanine level looking down to the first floor of the 505 Building in Downtown Fremont. The mezzanine level will be redeveloped into a private meeting space, and the first floor will hold a fine dining restaurant and the lobby for the 505 Boutique Hotel.



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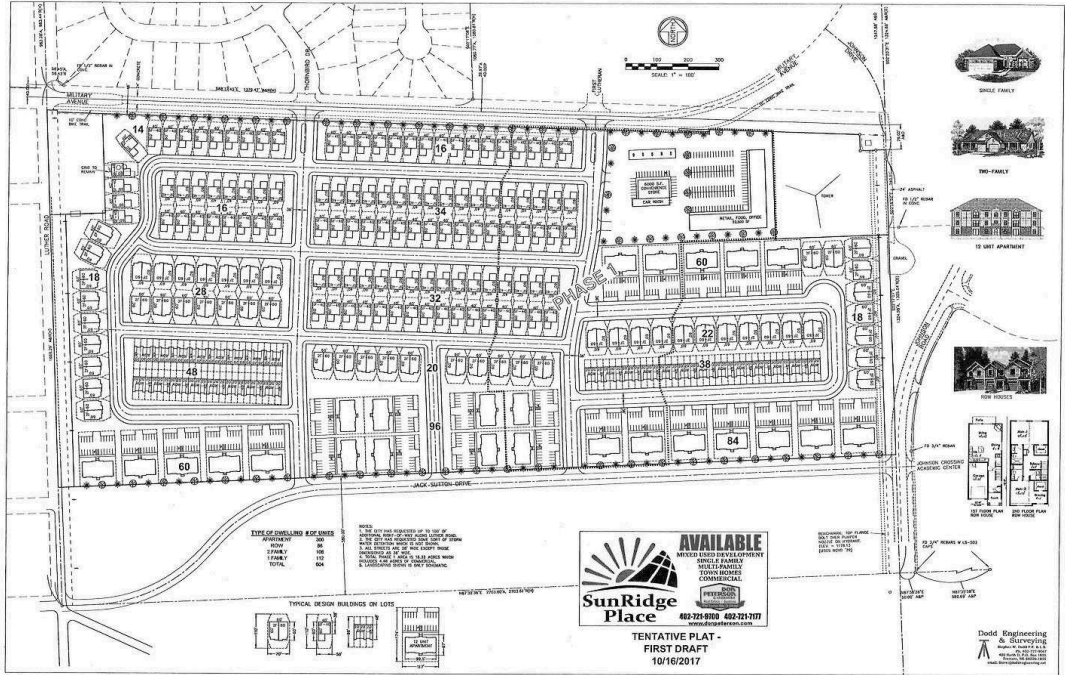
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A tentative plat for the proposed SunRidge Place housing development between Military Avenue, Jack Sutton Parkway, Luther Road, and Johnson Road.

Housing

From C2

will include apartments, townhomes and duplexes to the south along Jack Sutton Drive, with single family houses along the northern border of Military Avenue and a small area of commercial space in the northeast corner of the property.

The entire development is bordered by Military Avenue to the North, Jack Sutton Drive to the South, Johnson Road to the East and Luther Road to the West, putting possible residents in walking distance to schools, parks and churches.

According to Brabec, the plan includes approximately 240 units of apartments, 75 townhomes, 46 duplexes and 112 single family homes.

“We have had a very good relationship with the people that we bought this property from; They are the same people that owned the land where Day Acres is to the north and to the east, as well as Heatherwood and part of Brentwood,” he said.

The SunRidge Place development, like Duke Estates, has experience pushback from area



COURTESY

The plan calls for approximately 39.5 acres (112 lots) for single family residences; 7.4 acres (48 lots) for duplex construction; 11.6 acres for multi-family residential (220 units) and 46.5 acres for approximately 480,000 square feet of various commercial uses.

residents concerned with student safety, increased traffic and a proposed convenience store near the northeast corner of the devel-

opment.

“We are listening to our neighbors, because those neighbors are also our customers,” Brabec said.

Facility

From C3

for growth in our community, a lot of communities struggle to get a project like this to take place in their communities, it could easily be a 50-year gap, or never, before a project of this magnitude comes back,” he said. “This really is a life changer for the community, and it does show a lot about our community.”

Clark talked about the ripple effect of the project: the jobs, the housing developments, and the continued development of schools – so many things.

Bringing in more families into Fremont widens its tax base, which Clark said is a game changer.

“Housing is already an issue and a need, but it is going to become even more apparent, there are going to be an even bigger variety of housing options in the community,” he said. “In terms of tax base, we all know as economic developers that the more people you have to participate in the local taxes, the better. So when you broaden that tax base then it limits and lessens the burden on one individual citizen. So growth is ideal to remedy some of those issues.

The project as a whole is projected to comprise approximately 1 percent – \$1.2 billion annually – of the State of Nebraska’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and it’s estimated that the tax base added to Fremont and Dodge County could increase as much from \$63 million to \$93 million.

Originally it was anticipated that the processing facility would create upward of 1,200 jobs, Kolterman said, however, that was before Lincoln Premium Poultry realized how automated the facility would be. Now, it’s looking like it will be closer to the 800 mark.

“A lot of the technology that you will see inside of this facility is state-of-the-art technology that comes from all over Europe and Canada,” Kolterman said. “They visited Iceland, Holland, Germany, the UK,

Canada and all over. Everywhere they visited in the early planning phases they would look at equipment and they would say, ‘show us the newest things you’ve got and tell us how it works and tell us the pros and cons of each component.’”

The processing facility also features a walkway through the facility enabling tours without getting in the way of work being completed on the floor.

“We are putting through a walkway where we can take through visitors who want to see what we are doing within our facility, and we can do that without ever having to step foot on the plant floor,” she said. “This way we can make sure our employees can do their jobs without interference, and it allows us to provide that transparency that shows we are doing things humanely, while also educating people about where their food comes from.”

The plant will also feature an in-door unloading area for birds, which is not a common feature at many facilities, she said.

“Most traditional designs for facilities of this nature have a bay on the outside of the building where the trucks pull up and unload the poultry,” she said. “We are going to have an inside location where the trucks will be able to pull into the building, they will close the door and then they will unload ... It’s a dual-purpose, one, it allows the environmental benefits in terms of you get to mitigate anything that people would be concerned about relating to dust or odor, and most importantly, it’s a more humane treatment of the poultry.”

If the birds are cold, they can be warmed up inside the building and if they are hot, it’s easier to cool them down.

“It just allows for a better poultry process,” she said.

While the projected workforce numbers have been lessened, there are still hundreds of jobs that need filling.

“If someone has a real strong interest in working for us, I think there most

likely will be some sort of opportunity that will be a good fit for them,” she said.

Many of the jobs will enable people who are unemployed or underemployed to find one solid stream of income – with benefits – to provide for their loved ones.

“We do have a high percentage of people in our state – higher than you might expect – who are working two or three jobs,” Gov. Pete Ricketts said. “And if we are able to create some great-paying jobs that they can support their families on with just one (job), then that obviously works out better for everybody, because those usually come with benefits, and it will allow for more free time with the family.”

Currently, parking lots and roads have been under development for the facility, and the 160-foot-tall feed mill was erected in November and December. Kolterman said that work is beginning on some areas of the processing facility, and that one of the next big steps is to build the hatchery.

“My hope is that we, as a team, will be able to walk into that processing facility within the next six to eight months from now, and there will be walls, and things put together and we will be able to start talking about the equipment that goes into it,” she said.

By early 2019, the goal is to start putting equipment into the facility getting it ready to churn out birds during the summer of 2019, Kolterman said.

Clark said that the overall project is huge in terms of continued growth of the City of Fremont, and also a big recruiter for other companies to look at Fremont as a place to bring its business. Cities as a whole, he said, have to prepare for change moving forward or they will ultimately become stagnant.

“Communities that never plan for future growth and change fail,” he said. “Especially in rural places you see housing dilapidated, those numbers in terms of cost go up, and then what you see is an exodus of your talent,

that talent starts leaving for greater opportunities in places that have hub com-

munities with real opportunities ... So you have to recognize your past, that’s

important, but you also have to be ready for the future.”

Fremont Housing Timeline

2005: Hanna-Keelan Associates, P.C. conducts Greater Fremont Housing Study.

June 2010: Fremont voters approve Ordinance 5165 requiring every potential apartment renter to get an occupancy license from the Fremont Police Department and to show proof they are in the country legally.

April 6, 2011: Nelsen Partners announce details of Fremont Commons planned development at press conference.

June 2012: Parkside Apartments open on Military Avenue.

April 9, 2013: Fremont Commons Memorandum of Agreement proposal pulled from City Council agenda to be heard at a later date.

June 28, 2013: The U.S. Eight Circuit Court of Appeals upholds the Fremont ordinance that limits hiring and providing rental housing to “illegal” and “unauthorized aliens” is not discriminating.

Jan. 14, 2014: The Fremont City Council hires ASK Development Solutions Inc. to perform an analysis of impediments to fair housing.

Feb. 11, 2014: Fremont voters reject Fremont’s city council attempt to repeal the rental portions of the ordinance by a 60 percent voter rejection.

May 5, 2014: The U.S. Supreme Court refuses to review the ordinance that bans renting homes to illegal immigrants that was upheld by the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

June 24, 2014: ASK presents their study to the Fremont City Council. The study found an inadequate supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income residents, a shortage of accessible housing units, and the risk of inadequate planning to meet the needs.

July, 2015: Ritz Lake housing development holds ribbon cutting.

January 13, 2017: Cosentino Holdings, LLC purchases Fremont Commons, LLC.

April 10, 2017: Cosentino Holdings, LLC granted warranty deed for tract of land to herein be known as Gallery 23 East, LLC.

June 27, 2017: Fountain Springs Estates holds ribbon cutting ceremony.

October 31, 2017: City Council approves Planned Development rezoning for Duke Estates, LLC.

January 2, 2018: Don Peterson & Associates officially announces plan for SunRidge Place housing development.

“We built Day Acres. They are living in our subdivisions, but many of those are now understanding what we are doing and are becoming more receptive.”

Brabec pointed out that the City of Fremont and Fremont Public Schools have both been supportive of the proposed development and that SunRidge Place is the last piece of the puzzle in that area which includes past Don Peterson & Associates developments in the area like Day Acres, Day Acres East, Brentwood Park and

Heatherwood.

“No matter what it will not remain just a cornfield. It just won’t. We are very experienced in what we have done, and we have always had a good product and this will be a good product and I think it is important for people to remember that we don’t build junk,” he said. “This really is our town, and we are proud of our town. We’ve been a part of the community since 1957 when the company was established. We want nothing but good things for Fremont.”

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Budget woes dousing firefighter additions

Aging population adds to increased numbers of EMS calls in city

TAMMY REAL-MCKEIGHAN
News Editor

You'd think the day after Christmas would have been pretty mellow.

Not for the city's firefighters. That morning, a fire broke out at the former Uncle Larry's night club. Firefighters from Fremont and nearby communities fought the blaze in bone-chilling, sin-

gle-digit temperatures.

In the meantime, firefighters were called to single-vehicle roll-over accident on U.S 30.

Then the Fremont station got about five other rescue squad calls.

After that came the call to a house fire on North Nye Avenue. Fremont firefighters from off-duty shifts were called in to handle calls and area fire departments provided mutual aid.

It was one example of how thin Fremont's fire department can get stretched during multiple calls.

In 1969, Fremont's fire de-

partment began having three, nine-person shifts of paid firefighters.

That year, the department responded to 609 fire and medical calls.

Today, the department still has three, nine-person shifts of paid firefighters, with a minimum of seven firefighters and one paid fire chief.

But in 2015, the department had 2,447 medical and fire calls.

In 2016, it had 2,462.

In 2017, that number is said to have climbed to 2,742.

"We've been a nine-person shift

since 1969 and the call volume has gone up 300 to 400 percent," said Capt. Jamie Meyer, using the 2015 figures. "In 1969, they made one-fourth the number of calls we're making today — with the same number of people on a shift."

Pointing to the increase in calls — most of which are medical — Meyer said he sees a need for three more firefighters per shift.

Fremont City Administrator Brian Newton and Fremont Fire Chief Todd Bernt agreed it would be good to have another firefighter per shift.

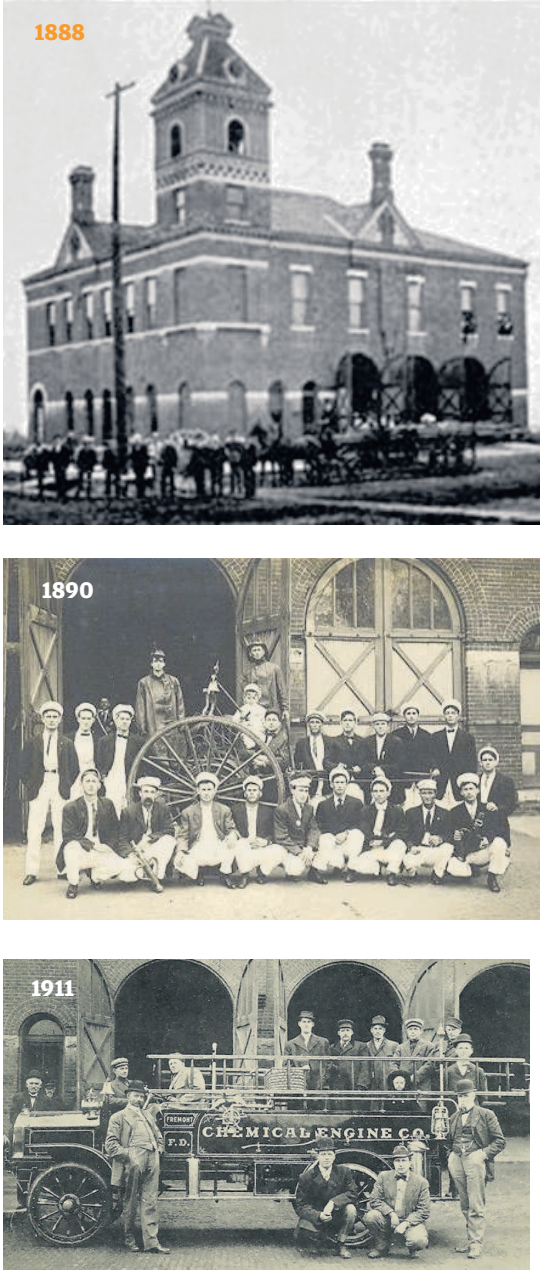
Bernt even said an assistant

chief, who would go on calls, was added to last year's budget.

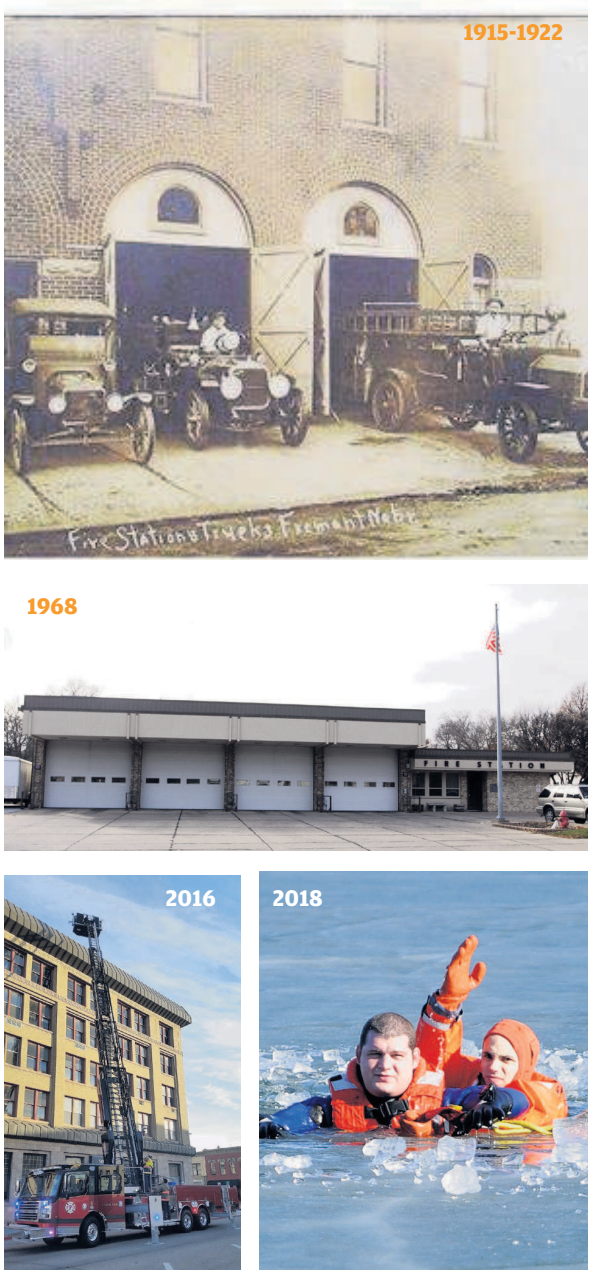
But due to the city's budget crunch — that position was eliminated.

"Initially, we went to the council with no new positions and we still had a budget shortfall so we asked for a 5-cent increase in the city's property tax mill levy to balance the budget," Newton said. "The council then asked for an additional cent and it went to 6 cents. They wanted an additional police officer."

Please see **FIREFIGHTERS**, Page C9



- ### Fremont's Fire Department History
- LATE 1860S:** Fremont's Fire Department is third fire department in the state of Nebraska.
 - 1888:** Fremont City Hall, built at corner of Fourth Street and Park Avenue, also contains fire station. A bell tower is erected in the building to call citizens with teams of horses to pull fire wagons and hose carts. When the bell sounds, the first person to reach the station and hook his team of horses to a piece of fire equipment gets paid for services.
 - 1890:** Volunteer companies in the early fire department boast a membership of 182.
 - 1911:** City buys Wilcox Hose and Chemical Truck. This was the first motor-driven firetruck in Nebraska. A man hired for \$65 a month to run and take care of the truck becomes the first paid fire department employee.
 - 1915-1922:** Additional motorized trucks purchased.
 - 1929:** Position of paid fire chief created and held by Harry Struve until 1932.
 - 1937:** Seven volunteer fire companies are reduced to four. Volunteer fire department remains divided into companies until about 1990. "Companies" are dropped. Instead, members meet under heading of Fremont Volunteer Fire Department.
 - 1968:** Current fire station, 415 E. 16th St., is built for \$240,000.
 - LATE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S:** Fire department members become Emergency Medical Technicians.
 - 1989:** Defibrillators introduced and are controversial acquisition. The next year, fire department members save their first life as a direct result of using a defibrillator.
 - 1993:** City OK's department's request to become an Advanced Life Support (ALS) service.
 - 1995:** Department obtains paramedic license.
 - 2016:** Department responds to 2,462 emergencies. Of those, 2,238 are medical and 224 fire. The department receives new Rosenbauer Aerial Platform truck. Old aerial was 30 years old.
 - CURRENTLY:** Additional services the department provides includes water, ice, trench, high angle and confined space rescue, and hazardous materials response.





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Officials: 2nd station is years down the road

TAMMY REAL-MCKEIGHAN
News Editor

While looking at the future of the Fremont Fire Department, officials note the importance of increased staffing.

But there are other considerations as the city grows — the eventual need for another fire station.

The City of Fremont’s “Blueprint for Tomorrow” from 2012 discusses considering the International Association of Fire Fighters recommendations to either build a new fire station to supplement the existing one.

Or to build two new stations to replace it.

Fremont’s fire station at 416 E. 16th St., was built in 1968 for \$240,000.

“Since we’re so centrally located, the majority of our calls are within a mile or mile and a quarter of the fire station,” said Fire Chief Todd Bernt, estimating 65 percent of calls fall in this area.

Fremont City Administrator Brian Newton estimated between 70 and 80 percent of the calls were within a slightly larger area — 1 ¾ miles of the station.

But various entities fall outside of this radius such as: Fremont



COURTESY PHOTO

The Fremont Fire Department when it was located at 4th and Park Streets.

Middle School, Johnson Crossing Academic Center; St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Archbishop Bergan Elementary School, Deerfield Apartments and the Ritz Lake development.

How long does it take to reach a certain area in case of an emergency?

The fire department’s 2016 annual report listed the in-town average response time as four minutes and two seconds, while the out-of-town average response time is seven minutes and 51 seconds.

Please see **STATION**, Page C9



TRIBUNE FILES

Firefighters from the Fremont and Cedar Bluffs fire departments fight a blaze at the former Uncle Larry’s night club on the day after Christmas. Firefighters battled the blaze in bone-chilling, single-digit temperatures.

Firefighters face a host of hazards

Those who battle blazes risk heart attack, see trauma most folks don’t

TAMMY REAL-MCKEIGHAN
News Editor

Firefighters exert a lot of energy.

“Nowhere in professional sports does a person exert as much energy as a firefighter does at a working fire,” said Capt. Jamie Meyer of the Fremont Fire

Department.

Consider a firefighter, wearing an air pack, dragging a hose into a structure fire.

Combine that with the pressures of the unknown and if people are inside.

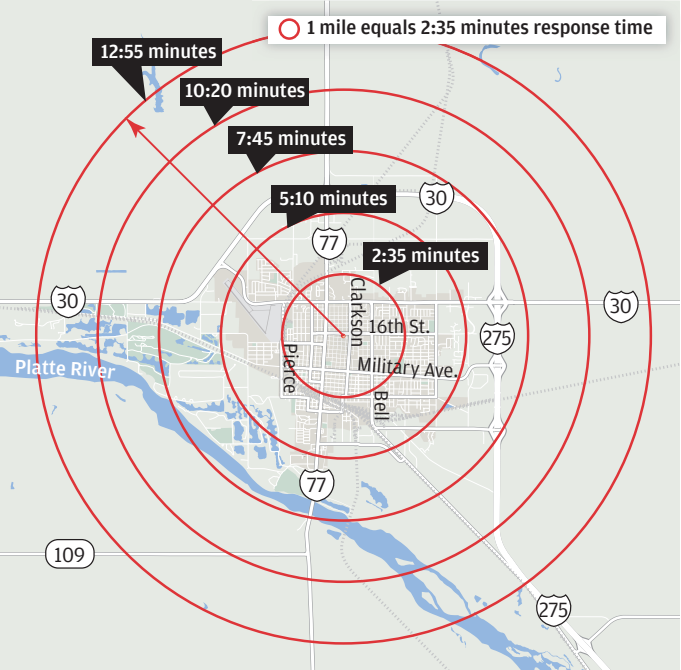
The firefighter must think clearly and calmly through the situation.

“All those things add up,” Meyer said. “They’re doing it (fighting the fire) until it’s done

Please see **HAZARDS**, Page C9

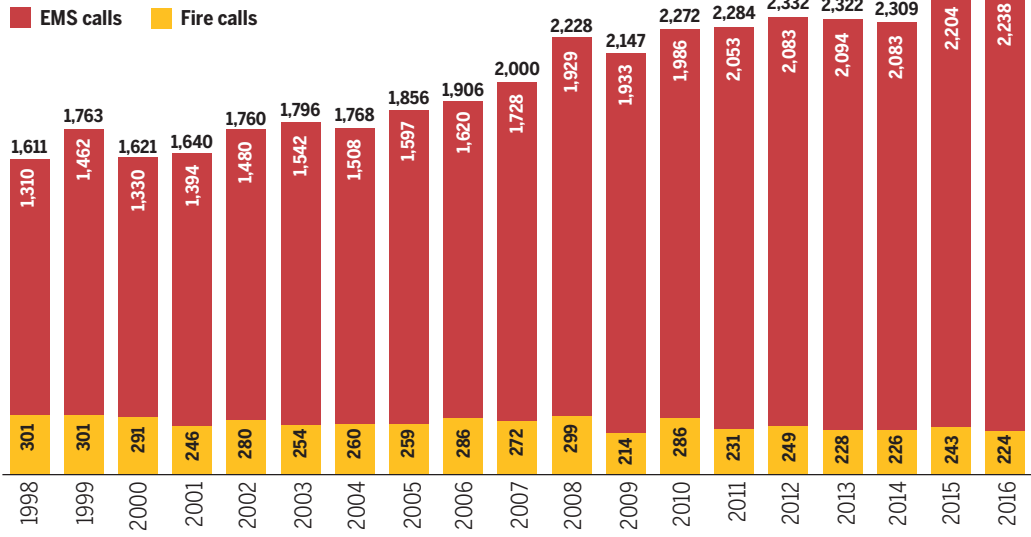
Response time

Average travel time from the Fremont Fire Department based on the equation developed by the RAND Corporation.



Emergency runs

The number of emergency runs the Fremont Fire Department per year.



Lee Enterprises graphic

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Station

From C7

“Response time is measured from the time the call is received at the fire station to the time department personnel arrive on the scene,” the report states.

Capt. Jamie Meyer of the Fremont Fire Department said response vehicles are allowed to travel 10 miles over the speed limit barring traffic and/or weather conditions.

He estimated response times at more than five minutes to the public schools, Deerfield and Ritz Lake and more than three to St. Patrick’s.

Using an Insurance Service Office (ISO) formula, the Tribune estimated times at: 5.64 minutes for Hormel Foods Corp. (having to go around and use the viaduct); 7.29 for Splash Station and 7.99 minutes for Ritz Lake and Costco.

In 2016, the Fremont Fire Department responded to 2,463 calls. The majority of those were emergency medical service (EMS) calls.

Bernt said there are roughly 7.7 calls in an average 24-hour shift. The highest number of calls has been 14 while the lowest has been one.

Newton and Bernt have said they’d like to have one more firefighter per shift, but that wasn’t possible in this year’s city budget.

“We’d like additional firefighters, sure we would, and maybe when we start looking at the 2019-2020 budget we’ll look at it again,” Newton said.

Eventually, local officials will need to look into another expenditure.

“Within the next seven to 10



TRIBUNE FILES

Children and adults get a closeup look at the equipment housed at the Fremont Fire Department during an open house.

years, there probably will have to be another station,” Bernt said.

Newton suspects it will need to be located in the east part of town to handle some of the growing residential neighborhoods.

“Where would you put it today? Where are you going to respond? There’s no immediate growth right now,” Newton said.

“Someday, we’ll plan for a second station.”

As in the case of providing more firefighters, getting another station would require funds.

“You’re looking at a multi-million dollar project,” Bernt said, adding, “My immediate concern is staffing due to our increase in (call) volume.”

Newton also cited the cost factor as far as staffing.

“We’re sensitive to taxpayer dollars and property taxes,” he said.

“If Fremont starts growing and we start getting new rooftops, because rooftops are homes — businesses don’t add calls residential rooftops do — if we start seeing some of these proposed subdivisions come to fruition, yes we’ll be able to have the additional income in property taxes that will warrant the additional police and fire department personnel,” Newton said.

“We just simply cannot do it today without raising taxes yet another time.”



Capt. Jamie Meyer of the Fremont Fire Department calls to his crew during a call in 2014.

Hazards

From C7

there. There’s no time out, no break, no changing sides until your air supply is exhausted.”

Such exertion is one of many things to consider when staffing a fire department.

Meyer points out that firefighters undergo training to learn to spot dangers and hopefully miss them. He also tries to send in “fresh” guys so the ones fighting the fire can come out, take their coats off and rest.

But if not enough firefighters can arrive on time, the others go back in.

“And they’re doing this with seven guys — if you don’t lose two hauling people to the hospital,” he said.

Since 1969, the Fremont Fire Department has staffed three shifts of firefighters.

Nine firefighters are assigned to each of the 24-hour shifts.

But due to illnesses, vacations or other circumstances the shift may only have the minimum number of seven firefighters.

When the department gets more than one call at once, firefighters on duty divide up to handle them.

Oftentimes, off-duty firefighters are called back to handle the extra calls. Area volunteer firefighters may be called in to help.

And while the department had 609 calls in 1969, it had 2,463 in 2016.

Firefighting is also much more technical than it was in 1969.

“It’s not just putting the wet stuff on the red stuff,” Meyer said.

Firefighters are trained in high angle rescue — such as from an elevator or cell tower. They’re trained to rescue people from confined spaces and grain elevators.

They’re trained in water rescue and have a dive team.

Other training includes trench rescue — how to safely dig out and rescue someone who was digging in a trench when it collapsed.

To add to the technicality, serving on a rescue squad is more than taking someone to a hospital.

“We’re a mobile ER to try and stabilize people or revive them before we get to the hospital,” Meyer said.

“That’s the whole goal of paramedics.”

Fremont has agreements with outlying communities for Advanced Life Support.

Emergency response travel times

Location	Miles	Time (mins)
West end of Lake Ventura (NV*)	6.1	14.335
Schilke Fields	4.3	10.105
Eagle Distributing	3.8	8.93
Midland Beach, Fremont		
Lakes SRA (NV)	3.6	8.46
Royal Canin (NV)	3.5	8.225
Costco/Lincoln Premium Poultry	3.4	7.99
Ritz Lake, northeast corner	3.4	7.99
Gallery 23E entrance	3.4	7.99
Splash Station	3.1	7.285
Deerfield	3.1	7.285
Menards	2.7	6.345
Hormel (V)	2.4	5.64
Duke Estates (V)	2.4	5.64
Milliken Park Elementary (NV)	2.2	5.17
Duke Estates (NV)	2.2	5.17
Bergan Elementary	2	4.7
Hormel (NV)	1.9	4.465
Airport (NV)	1.6	3.76
*NV = No viaduct		
Notes:		
1. Miles based on Google Maps quickest route		
2. 1 mile = 2.35 minutes (based on ISO formula of T = 0.65 + 1.7D		

If a smaller town squad has a critical patient, Fremont paramedics will drive out and meet them, putting their personnel and their equipment on the area squad and ride to the hospital with them, starting as much advanced life support as possible.

“That’s what it’s all about, helping each other,” Meyer said.

Meyer notes the Fremont Rural Volunteer Fire Department is the first to fill in at the station if the Fremont’s paid firefighters are busy with a fire.

Yet more than likely, these rural volunteer firefighters will go directly to the scene of a fire.

Other volunteer fire departments — from Arlington, Hooper or Nickerson may bring a squad or engine to man the station to cover Fremont if need be.

If more help is needed, Fremont might bring in North Bend.

“We help each other, because at one point in time, we’re all going to need it,” Meyer said.

Meyer notes that Fremont has an ambulance service, which stays busy, too.

Firefighters — paid and volunteer — face a host of hazards.

In December, for instance, Nickerson Fire Chief Dusty Menking and Fremont Rural Assistant Fire Chief Carl Nielsen told the Tribune about dangers firefighters face in extreme cold.

“When you fight fires, you get wet — and when you get wet you get even colder,” Menking said.

Working in such frigid situations can lead to frostbite, when extreme

cold freezes the skin, and hypothermia, which according to the Mayo Clinic can cause dangerously low body temperatures and lead to death.

Exerting themselves in the cold weather is dangerous, too, as firefighters must perform very strenuous tasks such as pulling heavy water hoses.

“The leading cause for the firefighters’ death is heart attack and it’s usually in response to these types of situations,” Menking said.

Nielsen pointed out other hazards, such as possible slips and falls.

“When you’re spraying water — when the temperatures are like this — as soon as that water hits anything it immediately turns to ice. So you’ve got slip hazards,” Nielsen said.

Firefighters make many sacrifices.

They miss birthdays and holidays. Some might work the day or night of Christmas Eve and come back to work Christmas Day.

“Those are things we’ve accepted when we took the job,” Meyer said.

“We knew what we were going to be missing.”

Firefighters also see deaths and accidents that they’ll remember for the rest of their lives.

“You see, smell and hear things that the average Joe doesn’t comprehend, but it’s part of the job,” Meyer said.

“Everybody faces traumas, but the number of them that one can see in this job. It can be a little overwhelming at times.”

That said, firefighters want to help others.


“The guys who do the job, love the job, or they wouldn’t do it,” Meyer said.



TRIBUNE FILES

A Fremont firefighter hangs upside down as part of the high aerial rescue training conducted in 2015. The maneuver is designed to help build confidence in the climbing equipment that is used.

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New Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center proves to be game changer

BY SAM PIMPER
Fremont Tribune

Filling up an Olympic-sized 50-meter swimming pool isn't something that can be done in a matter of hours – it's quite the operation.

On Jan. 20 and 21, the long endeavor took place inside of the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center, which is scheduled for a Feb. 6 ribbon-cutting ceremony at the facility from 4-5:30 p.m.

Over two days, more than 700,000 gallons of water were dumped into the swimming pool. There is still quite a bit of work to be completed before the facility will be fully operational, but watching the water level rise gave those involved with the project –

one that's been in the works since as early as 2005 – a massive sense of accomplishment.

"When they first fill it up they have to fill up the pipes, fill up the surge tanks, and with all that you're looking at over 700,000 gallons of water," said Fremont Family YMCA CEO Jerry Rinne. "It's a couple day process. They actually had to fill it up, then drain it a little to make a couple repairs – which they knew they might have to do – but now it's all the way full."

The \$15.2 million dollar project – \$14 million of which has been raised – covers expenses for the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center and renovating the area where the current lap pool and

recreational pool reside, he said.

The new 30,000 square-foot facility houses one body of water with six 50-meter lanes running east and west, and 12, 25-yard lanes that will accommodate competitive and recreational swimmers at the same time.

In addition, there's seating for upward of 400 people, two locker rooms, a hot tub, steam room, family changing rooms, a splash pad and diving well.

Now that the main pool area is reaching completion, the current lap pool will soon be transformed into a 5,000-square-foot free weights and CrossFit training area and the current instructional pool will be filled in and covered with turf, providing an approximately

6,000-square-foot multi-purpose area where numerous classes and activities can be completed.

Rinne estimates that work will begin with filling in the old lap pool and instructional pool tentatively within the next six months, and right now, conversations are taking place regarding how to transition swimmers into the new facility.

"Right now we are in the middle of swim lessons, and we didn't want to take the kids out of this (instructional) pool halfway through and put them in a whole different environment," he said. "Our transition just to get to the new pool is going to take a little bit of time."

The plan is to keep the instruc-

tional pool open for a period of time to accommodate swimmers and swim lessons, said Dian Christensen-Hillis, newly hired director of aquatics for the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center.

Currently, four swim teams utilize the current pools – YMCA Recreational, YMCA Competitive, Fremont High School and Special Olympics teams.

Rinne said that with Christensen-Hillis' swimming background and networking capabilities that she was a natural fit for the job. Christensen-Hillis has served as assistant and head coach for multiple United States Special Olympic Swim teams, as well as

Please see **CENTER**, Page C10

Firefighters

From C6

Taxes went from .32 to .38 for \$100,000 of property value.

"We'd like additional firefighters, sure we would, and maybe when we start looking at the 2019-2020 budget we'll look at it again," Newton said.

Bernt expressed some optimism.

"There have been good conversations within this last budget year about staffing," he said. "The administration is very aware of our call volume."

Yet it comes down to the dollar, he said.

"It's always the dollars," Newton agreed. "If we had the chief of police here, he'd be saying we need additional officers. And he'd have statistics that say we need additional officers."

"We're sensitive to taxpayer dollars and property taxes."

Meanwhile, call volumes for firefighters continue to increase.

In the 2016 fire department report, Bernt described the year as the busiest one yet.

Approximately 91 percent of the calls involved emergency medical services.

Bernt said the aging population drives the EMS calls. The average EMS patient's age has risen from 51 to 57.

In 2016, there were 2,238 medical calls, up 34 from the previous year.

The other 224 calls involved fire emergencies, down 19 from the previous year.

Leading causes of fires included:

- Improper disposal of smoking materials.
- Children playing with matches, lighters.
- Electrical.
- Arson.

The calls themselves included:

- Structure fires.
- Smoke odor investigations.
- Automatic fire alarms.
- Vehicle fires.
- Hazardous materials.
- Unauthorized burning
- Severe weather



TRIBUNE FILES

Firefighters work to extinguish an apartment house fire on Jan. 6 at the corner of Second and Maple Streets in Fremont. There were no injuries.

■ Cooking and dumpster fires and others.

"It gets busier and busier every year," Meyer said.

And it can get tricky when two calls come at once.

One example occurred in April 2016.

A call came in at 11 p.m. and seven firefighters went to a house on West 10th Street.

Two minutes later, a second call came in about a strong odor of smoke coming from an apartment above a downtown restaurant near First Street.

Firefighters heading toward 10th Street could see the glow of the blaze by the time they reached Military Avenue and Pierce Street.

Meyer made some decisions.

He had a dispatcher call the two off-duty shifts of firefighters back to the station, saying whoever arrived first should go to the Main Street location.

"We don't have enough manpower to fight a single structure fire, let alone a second one in a commercial building in downtown Fremont at the same time," he said.

Meyer also asked Fremont Rural Volunteer Firefighters to come to the 10th Street location and for

the Arlington Volunteer Rescue Squad to man the Fremont fire station in case of medical calls.

Off-duty firefighters went to station to suit up and headed out to the apartment fire.

Twenty minutes passed from the time of the call until firefighters were able to reach the downtown apartment.

One of the tenants asked what took so long.

Bernt said it can take about 15 to 20 minutes for off-duty firefighters to get to the station.

In 2010, Bernt said the department had more than 200 callbacks.

However, he estimates the fire department has an average of between 150 and 160 callbacks a year – about the same number it's been for the last 20 years.

"The reason our callbacks aren't going up (despite the increase in the number of calls) is because we have some officers who are better managing it," Bernt said.

Officers such as captains and lieutenants are communicating better to coordinate the workload – asking if one of the squads is transporting or not, if they're at the hospital or are available to help.

It can take some coordination.

"The medical end is where you really feel the pinch," Meyer said.

With a medical call, three personnel go in the rescue squad. Two or more go in the chase vehicle – either a pickup with extra gear or in the case of a motor vehicle accident, a fire engine with specialty equipment, Bernt said.

Meyer said that with more hands, the job can be done more efficiently and effectively and with a decreased amount of on-scene time.

Having more help also is vital considering the many large people in today's society.

"We need extra manpower to carry large people out of houses – maybe up from a basement or from upstairs to downstairs," Meyer said.

It can take four guys to pick up a patient and put him in a squad.

That many are needed not only for the safety of the patient, but those carrying him.

"We're a back injury away from losing our career," Meyer said. "One injury, I'm done."

There are other considerations for having another firefighter on each shift.

While each shift has nine fire-

fighters, some may be off for vacation, illness, injury or other reasons.

With a seven-man minimum, if five men go on a squad run that leaves two at the station.

"So many times, they've been at one call, way out, with five guys and I've been on the second call and have gotten a third call," Meyer said.

With no time to call back guys from other shifts, Meyer must decide which is the most critical of the calls.

And it might be that third call.

"When you're short and have that many calls, somebody is going to be waiting," he said.

They've had four or five calls in an hour and a half.

"It's so difficult with seven guys," Meyer said.

Having another firefighter per shift would mean that a group at the station could take that third call, thus cutting down on the number of callbacks.

And it would save time when firefighters are called from their homes to return to the station.

The department also can be stretched thin when firefighters are hurt on or off the job or get sick or retire – or quit to take a job somewhere else, like Omaha or Lincoln.

Since he became a captain in 1999, Meyer said between 17 and 20 firefighters have left Fremont to take a job with another department.

When such things occur, firefighters fill in on what's called short shifts.

For instance, they'll work their 24-hour shift, then work another 12-hour shift.

"Not only do you have guys working to fill short shifts, you get multiple calls and working fires and we have to call back for help to cover the city," Meyer said.

Another firefighter per shift would mean having the capacity for the immediate availability to Fremont citizens of three squads – with a manpower of nine- or 10-man minimum instead of seven, Meyer said.

And having additional firefighters could help prevent something nobody wants – burnout.

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Center

From C9

serving as a US Ambassador for the Michael Phelps Foundation. “I basically train in the US, but I do global trainings, too, for Special Olympic swimmers and coaches where I have stroke clinics working with them to raise the bar for them, and then to raise the bar for the coaches,” she said.

With the addition of the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center, the YMCA is now approximately 240,000-square-feet, making it the largest square-foot Y facility in the world. At the end of January, Rinne said that the non-profit will have 10,800 members, and has the capacity to have as many as 12,000.

“We can handle that many, but if they all tried going into the Wellness Center at once or something like that we might be in trouble,” Rinne joked.

Several meets are already scheduled to be held inside of the aquatic center, including: the 400-athlete YMCA State Meet held March 10, a large recreational swim meet this summer and the Heartland Athletic Conference meet in 2019.

The 50-meter pool is very unique in that it’s only the second pool of its kind in the state of Nebraska – the University of Nebraska at Omaha has the only other one.

This means that the capability is there to host any kind of meet, even the Olympic Swim Trials. While this won’t happen, it isn’t out of the realm of possibility for Olympic-caliber athletes to train at the facility leading up to the 2020 Olympic Swim Trials held inside of Omaha’s CenturyLink Center.

“A lot of the elite swimmers that swim in those competitions want to find pool space that is away from the venue to train,” Christensen-Hillis said.

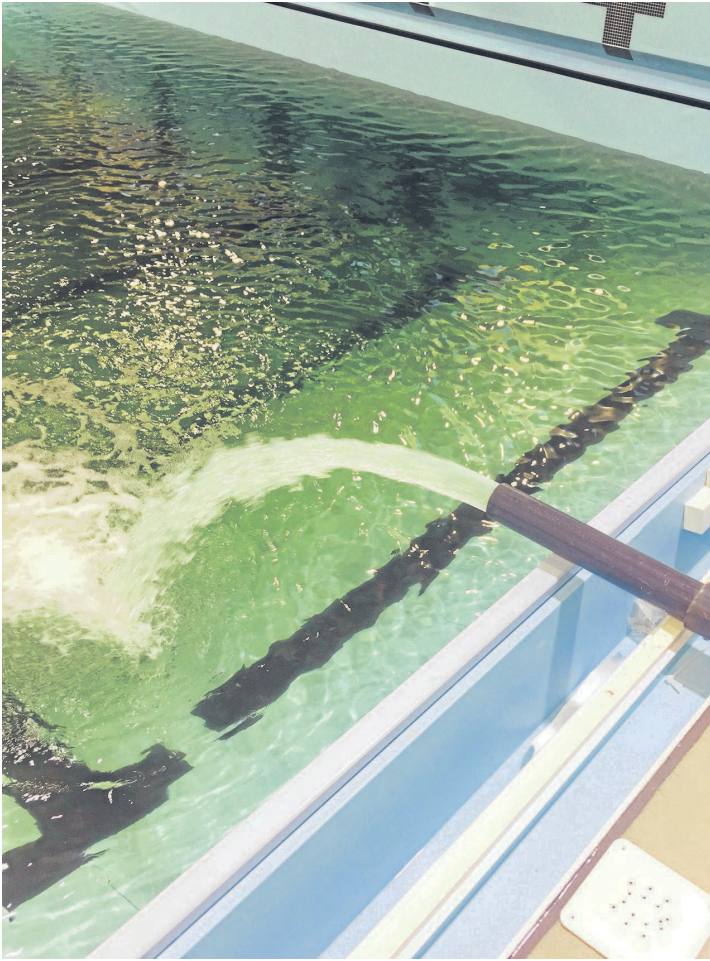
Added Rinne: “And it’s a Myrtha pool, which is the same pool that they will be swimming in, and that way they can get used to it.”

Not only will the new facility be a huge benefit to community members in terms of swim lessons provided, leisure activities and stirring up excitement about swimming, it will also benefit Fremont’s local economy.



PHOTOS COURTESY JERRY RINNE

A ramp on the west side of the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center’s 50-meter Myrtha Swimming Pool enables those with disabilities to enter the pool with ease.



The 50-meter Myrtha swimming pool inside of the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center was recently filled over a two-day course with upward of 700,000 gallons of water. The water still needs to be chemically treated.

Aquatic Center Timeline

- 2004:** Started having troubles with instructional pool.
- 2005:** Report on the lap pool because of moisture problems (\$150,000 to fix).
- 2007:** Study on the instructional pool: approximate cost to fix \$3 million (would look the same).
- 2012/13:** Invested over \$100,000 to keep current pools open.
- 2012:** YMCA board member / staff visited pools in the Midwest.
- 2014/15:** Hired WNB architects to help design a pool and Weitz construction as General contractors.
- 2015:** Received input from community about pools: first design cost over \$20 million.
- 2016:** Finalized new pool design at a cost of \$14 million along with renovations of lap pool (into more wellness) and instructional pools (into a multi-purpose field turf total cost \$15.2 million).
- 2016:** Started construction on Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center.
- Jan. 20-21, 2018:** Olympic sized pool in the Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center filled with water.
- Feb. 6, 2018:** Planned ribbon cutting ceremony.

“The economic impact this will have on the city will be tremendous,” Rinne said. “With the large swim meets we will have that will bring in a large

number of people into the community. They will stay at our hotels, they will eat here, and they will buy stuff at the stores. Then you look at the amount of

people we will bring in for swim lessons, not only from Fremont but from outside – people from North Bend, Arlington and other places.

“When they do that they will stop and shop, maybe pick up groceries, get gas and all sorts of things that makes an impact to our community.”

While first and foremost the pool is there to fulfill a need, it absolutely is an incredible sight. “There is just this huge ‘awe’ factor when you walk in there, I mean, I can’t even imagine being a little swimmer and walking in there and going, ‘oh my gosh I want to learn to swim,’” Christensen-Hillis said. “Every day you walk in there and you just have a new appreciation of what we have.”

Because of its size, the pool can be used for a variety of activities at one time, something lacking with the old pools, Rinne said.

“You can have the little kids taking swim lessons, and we

can have some guys and ladies taking a water aerobics class, and then we can have our swim teams swimming in the lanes and then maybe some people doing something in another part (of the pool),” Rinne said. “So these little kids can see all the progression – from learning how to swim to doing some of these other things like joining the swim team.”

Fremont has a reputation for taking swimming seriously, and that’s a credit to all the leaders in the swimming community emphasizing its benefits and its importance. Christensen-Hillis said that the new Dillon Family YMCA Aquatic Center takes it to an entirely different level.

“This is so impactful, and I won’t be here to see just how impactful it will be throughout a lifespan,” she said. “But what I do know is that the Y changes lives. When somebody can belong to a YMCA, what it does to your growth and your character is just amazing. It just stays with you.”

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