

Context: Written on behalf of Kevin Bolding, CEO of the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh, in advance of transferring the oldest YMCA asset out of Y ownership to undergo renovation. The Centre Avenue YMCA was one of the first YMCAs for serving black men and women and has served as a low-income facility since the 1920s.

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January 24, 2020

Dear Y Staff:

Early Friday morning, the sign in front of the Centre Avenue YMCA was removed in preparation for the renovation of the historic building. Shamrock Signs oversaw the removal and transported the sign to the Senator John Heinz History Center, where it will be housed and preserved.

For nearly 98 years, the sign graced the front of 2621 Centre Ave. Although its removal is bittersweet, it marks a turning point in the revitalization process of the storied building. It is the culmination of more than four years of work led by the Centre Avenue/The尔ma Lovette YMCA board, the Association board, YMCA staff and ACTION-Housing. This process began in 2015 with a feasibility study funded by McCauley Ministries, who went on to pledge the lead gift towards the renovation.

Now, in the coming weeks, ownership of the building will transfer from the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh to Centre Avenue Housing Inc., a new entity formed in conjunction with ACTION-Housing. The building will then undergo a 10-month, \$7.1 million renovation resulting in a rejuvenated, fully accessible and affordable housing facility with new bedroom units, private bathrooms, an elevator, updated HVAC and more. The project has been fully funded with a combination of private gifts and local and state funds.

To be clear, this is not a branch closing. This is the combination of resources between two non-profits who are dedicated to bettering their shared community. The partnership with ACTION-Housing and relationship with the new Centre Avenue Housing Inc. will ensure the best possible quality of services for a population that is vulnerable and traditionally underserved.

The kickoff to the renovation project will be marked with a ceremony on Friday, Feb. 14 at the Centre Avenue YMCA. Special thanks to Aaron Gibson, regional executive director, and the Thelma Lovette board for their vision and leadership to get us to this point.

Although ownership and operations will transfer, our Y will remain closely involved for the foreseeable future to ensure residents and staff have a smooth transition throughout the renovation. Rooms will be renovated by floor, allowing all residents to retain housing during the process. Part-time staff members will have the option to pursue alternate employment with the YMCA or transition to the management company who will operate Centre Avenue Housing.

A committee has been tasked with ensuring the YMCA will forever remain a part of the building. A legacy wall is planned celebrating the history and cultural significance of the facility including its opening in 1922, the historic designation in 1995 and its ongoing role as a centerpiece of the Hill District.

While it is hard to say goodbye to a building that has played such a significant role in the history of our Y and the community it has served, we do so happy in the knowledge that the building will be significantly improved and the residents will soon enjoy comfortable, affordable housing with access to excellent supportive services.



Kevin Bolding
President & CEO