

# Y looks for new home

## Foothills Y Board favors permanent site in Bountyland

BY GREG OLIVER  
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SENECA — Although a specific location to build the Foothills Area Family YMCA's permanent facility has yet to be officially determined, board members are favoring the Bountyland area.



Barrett

In addition, the board has named former U.S. Rep. Gresham Barrett to chair its capital campaign to support the construction and operation of the permanent facility.

The board recently voted to pursue a central location for its permanent YMCA building in Oconee County, preferably the Bountyland area. Chairman Fred Stutsman said the board made its decision after conducting an open process that incorporated input from community stakeholders and weighed near-term needs with long-term vision.

"This was a critical step in an ongoing effort to expand the reach of our YMCA and support the programming needs of our entire service area," Stutsman said.

Keowee River once appeared to be the hands-down choice for the Y's future home. In August 2009, the Foothills YMCA and the Keowee River Preservation Group announced a Y would be constructed on property owned by the group on S.C. Highway 130.

While the Y office was relocated there in January 2011, officials said economic conditions and questions regarding the ability of the S.C. 130 location to serve the needs of the area led to the desire to explore other options. The Y then sought Requests for Proposals for alternate sites that included Echo Hills Commerce Park on S.C. Highway 11 and placing the facility in the geographical center of the county — the Bountyland and Sheep Farm Road area between Seneca and Walhalla.

The Y relocated its headquarters from Keowee River to inside the Rankin Real Estate building — just east of the U.S. 123 and S.C. 130 intersection — in January.

After two months of engaging key community leaders, examining all past, present and future facility solutions and evaluating options on a formal rating system, the task force concluded its efforts earlier this month.

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## More than ever before, we have a responsibility'

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"We were very intentional about identifying the requirements of the facility and making sure all proposals were measured against five general categories — potential to serve the programmatic needs of the YMCA, accessibility by stakeholders, visibility/prominence of property, potential for membership and potential for funding," said Larry Golan, who led the Facility Task Force.

Y officials say plans for a capital campaign in support of the construction and operation of the permanent facility are foreseeable and they have already activated campaign leadership.

Barrett, an Oconee County resident who is employed by the Nelson, Mullins, Riley and Scarborough law firm, said the YMCA has been an integral part of the community for 117 years.

"More than ever before, we have a responsibility to elevate the conversation of health and wellness in this community and to deliver greater access to programs, outreach and enrichment activities," Barrett said.

Barrett and other members of the

campaign steering committee will work with the Foothills Y board, Executive Director Anna Connelly and professional counsel to solidify a vision for the permanent facility and its supporting capital campaign.

In December, Foothills Y officials held a public input meeting at the Shaver Recreational Complex to inform the community of their plans. Although Stutsman said the type of Y constructed will depend on what the public wants, he said it would cost more than \$5 million for a 29,700-square-foot facility. That facility would house a wellness center featuring 50 machines, a gym, exercise and multipurpose room, a childcare center, aquatics center and locker rooms.

An online survey conducted late last year ranked a lap pool and fitness room as the top two choices.

But Connelly said where the new Y facility will be located is also crucial to future success.

"The national Y says most people are willing to drive 15 to 20 minutes to go work out," Connelly said.