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Construction Coming Together for New Manzanita Room

By Cathy Tyson



A crane uses powerful vacuum suction cups on an assembly to hoist roofing panels on the new Manzanita Room in Lafayette. Photo Cathy Tyson

"It's like a giant erector set," said Project Manager Doug Swanson, who, along with Associate Engineer Mike Moran, is supervising the construction of the brand new Manzanita Room. The crumbling 60-year-old former structure used to house two kindergarten classrooms, said Moran, but had seen better days. The city of Lafayette purchased the community center in 1983 from the Lafayette Elementary School District; it was formerly Burton Elementary School.

With the foundation poured and steel support beams in place, the crew from JUV Inc. of Oakland is now busy assembling the roofing sections. Economical, ready-to-go panels with exterior and interior finishes sandwiching insulation get lifted into place by a crane with what Moran and Swanson call an "octopus" - eight powerful vacuum suction cups on an assembly hoisted by the crane. Tongue and groove edging on the panels' sides fit tightly together forming a no-leak seal.

The new and vastly improved building at the Lafayette Community Center on St. Mary's Road is approximately 5,300 square feet, and will cost \$2.3 million, paid for by park facilities fees, not the city's general fund. Measure WW funds, from the voter-approved East Bay Regional Park District bond measure, will pay \$241,000 of that total.

The original structure, dating back more than 60 years, had major structural issues, wasn't consistent with current building codes including seismic safety and would soon need a substantial amount of expensive repair. The all-volunteer Parks and Recreation Commission, after getting estimates on extensive remodeling versus a tear down, recommended that the city council start fresh for a more functional sustainable design that would be more beneficial over the long term.

The project is on schedule, said Jennifer Russell, director of Parks, Trails and Recreation, with wall panels scheduled to go in next week. "It was amazing how quickly the metal frame went up. The contractor is exceptionally diligent." She added, "We cut viewing windows through the fence fabric because so many people, especially little kids, love looking at the progress. We are very excited to open the building to the public in the later part of the summer."

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[back](#)

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