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Extell Gives \$2.5 Million For 59th Street Rec Center Renovation

By Leslie Albrecht



UPPER WEST SIDE — The long-awaited renovation of the West 59th Street recreation center recently got a financial boost, thanks to a \$2.5 million donation from the Extell Development Company.

The renovation, expected to be finished later this year, will include a new indoor pool, new locker rooms, a youth activities room, aerobics and fitness rooms, as well as new windows, skylights and an outdoor play area for the facility on West 59th Street between West End and Amsterdam avenues.

The center has been closed since 2009, when the city first started revamping it. Other funding for the \$13 million renovation came from City Councilwoman Gale Brewer, the mayor's office, Borough President Scott Stringer, and private and federal grants, said a Parks Department spokesman.

Extell agreed to pump money into the renovation when it won approval from the City Council to build Riverside Center, a luxury high-rise and retail complex to be built between West 59th Street, West End Avenue, West 61st Street and Riverside Boulevard.



The West 59th Street rec center is a few blocks from where Extell Development Company will build Riverside Center. (DNAinfo/Leslie Albrecht)

The money for the rec center renovation is part of \$20 million Extell agreed to give the Parks Department, one of [several concessions the developer made](#) during hard-fought negotiations with Brewer and other Upper West Side officials.

Built in 1906, the West 59th Street rec center was originally a bathhouse meant to serve the city's tenement population in Hell's Kitchen, many of whom didn't have indoor plumbing, according to the parks department's website.



Mayor William Strong said the city needed such facilities to serve "the great unwashed."

The neighborhood has changed since then, with apartments [at nearby Riverside South](#) now selling for as much as \$15 million.