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# T. Boone Pickens to donate \$5 million to downtown Dallas YMCA

05:00 PM CDT on Tuesday, October 21, 2008

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Billionaire oilman turned wind-power advocate T. Boone Pickens says he will donate \$5 million to renovate and improve the downtown Dallas YMCA – the largest single gift ever for a YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas facility.



YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas

T. Boone Pickens says he will donate \$5 million to improve the downtown Dallas YMCA. This rendering shows an image of the remodeled exterior.

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The donation from Mr. Pickens' charitable foundation, slated for official announcement Tuesday, will bankroll replacement of the aging building's façade and fund a variety of internal improvements, ranging from new elevators and stairwells to remodeled fitness facilities and enhanced programs.

Also changing: the building's name. It will henceforth be known as the T. Boone Pickens YMCA.

"Dallas is my home, and where I can help out the most is where I want to put my money," said Mr. Pickens, a YMCA patron in his younger years who has long advocated the physical fitness of his employees. "I'm an old Y person. And this building obviously needed help. They made a good presentation to us, and we were happy to do our part to help them."

Gordon Echtenkamp, president and chief executive of YMCA Metropolitan Dallas, says the donation will help the downtown YMCA better serve the fitness needs of a clientele quickly morphing from primarily center-city business people to full-time, downtown residents.

In the past decade, downtown Dallas' residential population has increased from a couple hundred people to more than 5,000. City officials project that as many as 10,000 people will reside inside Dallas' downtown freeway loop by early next decade.

The renovations, Mr. Echtenkamp said, are scheduled to begin early next year with completion projected for late 2009.

"This is an opportunity for us to do what we need to do and create a real, neighborhood Y feel," he said.

Likewise, the donation "will change this area, the heart of our city, helping us on our way to creating a vibrant and bustling downtown, which is something all major world-class cities have," Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert said in a statement. "And Boone Pickens' commitment to corporate fitness means a healthier Dallas for all of us."

This is the third major donation in recent months Mr. Pickens has made to an inner-city Dallas institution.

In December, he gave \$6 million to South Dallas' Jubilee Park neighborhood to clear blighted land and construct a new community center and a resource center housing a neighborhood police station. And last year, Mr. Pickens donated \$50 million to Dallas' University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Mr. Pickens, who made his fortune in the oil and gas industries, has recently made national news for his investments in wind-generated power, including a massive Texas wind farm.

He's also launched a national media campaign pushing the "Pickens Plan," an effort in part lobbying federal lawmakers to enact an energy policy mandating a 30 percent reduction in foreign oil use within 10 years.