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Lumanair to end time at airport



The Lumanair terminal at the Aurora Airport could soon be replaced by a new fixed-based operator. **STEVE LORD/BEACON-NEWS**

By Steve Lord
Beacon-News

The long-time association of Lumanair with the Aurora Airport is about to end.

The city is negotiating a new lease with Iowa-based Carver Aero to take over Lumanair's spot as a fixed-based operator at the airport.

The Aurora City Council this week approved the assignment of an amended and restated lease at the airport, which basically authorized city officials to begin negotiating with Carver Aero.

Mike Luman and his family go back to the early 1960s being involved with the Aurora Airport, according to Alex Alexandrou, Aurora's chief management officer.

"I want to thank Mike Luman for many years of hard work as a fixed-base operator," he said.

Carver Aero will be entering Illinois for the first time as a fixed-based operator by locating in Aurora. Headquartered in Muscatine, Iowa at that city's municipal airport, the company also has fixed-base operations in Daven-

port and Council Bluffs, as well as Janesville, Wis.

The Council Bluffs location has a large flight school that works with the University of Nebraska.

The company has been in business more than 30 years.

Alexandrou said city officials anticipate a new lease to bring back to the council in the months ahead. The lease will come with a commitment by Carver Aero to "a significant investment" in modernizing the airport facilities, he said.

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Victor Lopez, standing in the yard of the home he has owned in the Bardwell neighborhood for 40 years, is glad the old Copley Hospital is being restored, and says he may look into senior housing at the Bardwell Residences under construction on the Bloomhaven campus. **DENISE CROSBY/BEACON-NEWS**

Old hospital no longer haunts Bardwell neighborhood



Denise Crosby

After decades of hearing it can't be done, the residents of the Bardwell neighborhood are watching a blight turn into a gem right before their eyes.

And few have a better view than Myra and Albert Fonseca, who bought their Aurora home 29 years ago mainly because it was next to Bardwell Elementary School and Copley Hospital, only to have the medical facility pack up and move a couple years later.

It was hard, Myra Fonseca said, watching the abandoned campus gradually deteriorate under the weight of lawsuits, basement water and the refuse left behind by trespassers that included rodents, drug addicts, ghost hunters and other thrill-seekers, as well as gang members who filled the walls with the kind of graffiti no mom wants her daughter to see.

That was then, and this is now. Well into a \$128 million historic preservation project that Fox Valley Developers say is the largest in the state right now, the old Copley campus that was once "so dark, it would make you moody when you had to come home at night and look at it"

noted Fonseca, has been bustling with the activity from large earth-moving equipment and 125 construction workers who are turning this longtime dangerous eyesore into medical offices and more than 150 apartments for seniors as well as adults with developmental disabilities.

"Now, this is my favorite place to sit," said Fonseca, indicating the patio furniture in the enclosed front porch that is directly across the street from the former Copley campus now known as Bloomhaven.

"It feels positive," she said of the project that's not only rejuvenating the buildings that were built from the 1880s to the 1970s, but has brought this neighbor-

hood to life.

"It feels good to be around here and watch what is happening."

While the first of the apartments likely won't be ready until spring or summer of 2022, the new headquarters of East Aurora School District, once the old Copley nurse's dorm — is already open for business. And so is the Fox Valley Park District's newest park on one end of the campus that features the latest in playground equipment and a walking path to encourage multigenerational use of the area.

It's that concept of bringing young and old together that has

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Diversion program promotes services

Charges not always best choice for low-level crimes, officials say

By Megan Jones
Beacon-News

Instead of taking someone to jail or charging them with a low-level crime, some Kane County police will have the option to connect people to social services like a drug treatment center, mental health provider or a homeless shelter through a pilot program.

Starting in the Kane County sheriff's office and Elgin Police Department, the pre-arrest diversion program aims to arrest fewer people, reduce recidivism, and address the root cause of the criminal activity by helping people receive services. Officials sponsoring the program hope to expand it to other Kane County communities.

The program is modeled after Seattle's LEAD, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, program and was a part of the campaign that State's Attorney Jamie Mosser ran on. Currently, 60 cities across the U.S. are following the program and Elgin Police Sgt. Tony Rigano said the pilot program will begin in Kane County in the next two weeks.

Speaking at a public forum Thursday night at the Geneva Public Library, Rigano and others explained how the program will work.

"We know that what's been done — the war on drugs — isn't working," said the pre-arrest diversion coordinator Martha Paschke. "Continuing to put people in prison when they have mental health, substance abuse, or poverty issues doesn't work. In fact, that one night in jail might upend someone's life completely."

Instead, the program will help repeated low-level offenders build a long-term relationship with a case manager. After an officer comes across a suspect of a minor crime, officers can use their own discretion to decide if they want

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Woman convicted in 5 DUI deaths released from prison



James McGee, from left, Katherine Merkel, Matthew Frank, Jessica Nutoni and Tiffany Urso. **KENDALL COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

By Megan Jones
Beacon-News

An Aurora woman was released from state prison and placed in a work-release program after serving almost 12 years for a drunken-driving crash that killed five teenagers and injured several others in 2007 in Oswego.

Kendall County Judge Clint Hull sentenced Sandra Vasquez, 37, to 15 years in prison after jurors convicted her of aggravated drunken driving and reckless homicide for driving drunk during the early morning hours of Feb. 11, 2007.

She had been serving her sentence at the Decatur Correctional Center, according to the Illinois Department of Corrections. She entered a work-release program on July 27 at the Fox Valley Transition Center, said Lindsey Hess, public information officer for the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Kendall County State's Attorney Eric Weis

said he still thinks about the case often, even as the county saw another fatal suspected DUI crash this week that killed a 6-year-old girl from Joliet.

"We always go back to this case and wonder if people learn from horrific incidents like that or if we just continue to say the same thing over and over again," Weis said. "I still remember the date, the time, all of the victims and the victims who survived and their family members."

In the early morning hours, Vasquez went to pick up her sister from a home where teens had been drinking until a parent arrived and broke up the party, according to Beacon-News archives. She offered an intoxicated teen a ride, and soon wound up with a car full of teens.

She crashed her sedan into a telephone pole along Route 31, near River Run Road

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Tom Skilling's forecast High 75 Low 59

Chicago Weather Center: Forecast on back page

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Crosby

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Kendra Johnson so excited about this massive redevelopment project.

As the administrator for Bardwell Residences, which will feature upon completion 99 units for seniors in independent, assisted and memory care living arrangements, she understands how critical the idea of community can be for older folks.

And this continuum-of-care center, located next to Bardwell — its namesake and District 131's largest elementary school — will not only bring "so many jobs to the area," she noted, it's location can't help but provide unique partnerships and rich opportunities for all ages.

"I get messages and phone calls asking when we will start hiring," Johnson said, adding that she recently ran into a "young lady who went to Bardwell and is now a college pianist who wants to come and play for our older residents."

Over the last couple of decades, those neighborhood students, she added, have been too scared to walk onto the old Copley campus on their way to classes because of the criminal element it attracted.

No one knows that more than Fonseca's daughter Cindy, who was born at the old Copley Hospital 29 years ago and grew up in its dark shadow, well aware of other dangers the neglected buildings posed.

Kids would frequently trespass onto the property as the old abandoned hospital turned into an urban legend of sorts, attracting not just Aurora youth but those from surrounding towns looking for some fun with spirits, and not just the kind that came in a bottle.

"It was like living next to a haunted house," Cindy told me. "So many of my friends would sneak in at night and come out with all sorts of stories, including ones about all the raccoons. I heard them all. It was just



The Fox Valley Developers see the restoration of the old Copley Hospital, now called Bloomhaven, as a "monumental rejuvenation of the community" that surrounds the long-abandoned buildings.

so unhealthy, so unsafe."

Her mother nodded in agreement, pointing to the top of the three-story brick building as she recalled those nights she would sit on the front porch watching kids climb to the highest floor, worried someone would get hurt.

"For a while we would call the cops but by the time they came, the kids would be gone, Myra Fonseca said. "We figured the only way they would ever clean up this place was when someone tragically died."

Luckily, that did not happen.

Also fortunate was the fact local developers came along and decided that the historically-relevant-but-dilapidated campus was worth the time and money it would take to bring it back.

"It was that sense of community that drew us

to the project," insisted Jason Konrad of Fox Valley Developers.

"No one else wanted it, but Russ (Woerman), Mike (Poulakidas) and I all grew up in Aurora, and we knew we wanted to tackle this project; we knew we could get it cleaned up.

"So we jumped in with both feet. We saw it as a monumental rejuvenation of the community."

It's especially easy to see this vision when standing atop that third floor of the old hospital, where all sides offer a panoramic view of the Bardwell neighborhood, which includes a diversity of trees, churches and residents who seem to take great pride in their well-kept homes adorned with colorful flowers.

Myra Fonseca, in fact, is so excited about what she sees going on across the street, she's already making



Myra Fonseca and her daughter Cindy sit inside their enclosed front porch that overlooks the construction work going on across the street at the old Copley Hospital campus now known as Bloomhaven. DENISE CROSBY/BEACON-NEWS PHOTOS

plans to fix up her already tidy property even more.

"Now," she said, "I feel good about doing it."

On the other side of the campus now known as Bloomhaven, Victor Lopez laments the fact this year he has not planted as many flowers around his large white two-story home that is, nevertheless, still bursting with color from scores of flowering plants as well as patriotic bunting decorating his deck.

Now 77, Lopez is not in the best of health, he tells me.

In fact, at a doctor visit a couple of weeks ago, it was suggested he and his wife start giving some thought to selling the home they have owned for 40 years and consider a senior living facility.

He loves his spacious property with its brick walkways and roomy patio off the kitchen and wrought iron fence that surrounds a yard that has obviously been given a lot of attention. Lopez also loves the neighborhood that, even on a recent humid July morning, was teeming with

dog walkers and kids on bikes and, for a while now, yellow-vested construction workers he enjoys visiting with from time to time.

"I'm not there yet," he said of that life-changing move, which most of us will face at some time in our advancing years.

But looking into the Bardwell living options that will be offered right down the street would "be a good idea," he agrees.

"Maybe by the time they get done with it," he said with a smile, "I will be ready."



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