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\$4M land buy OK'd

U-46 board approves purchase of 10-acre property in Elgin

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Elgin Area School District U-46 is buying the 10-acre property at 1019 E. Chicago St. in Elgin. Urban Air Trampoline Park had announced plans to open an indoor amusement center last year, but plans fell through. *Elena Ferrarin | Staff Photographer*

The Elgin Area School District U-46 school board Monday night authorized spending \$4 million to buy more than 10 acres off Chicago Street east of downtown Elgin.

The property, at 1019 E. Chicago St., includes a large parking lot and a 95,521-square-foot building that had housed Sherman Health Resource Center until 2011. Advocate Sherman Hospital sold the property in late 2016 or early 2017.

The school board voted 6-0 to approve the purchase, which will be paid for through the district's reserves.

U-46 CEO Tony Sanders has said the building could be converted to house the district's Family Welcome Center, consolidating language testing, early childhood screening and student registration there.

The site would provide convenient parking and easier access for families. Currently, the welcome center/language testing services are located inside the district's administrative offices at 355 E. Chicago St., while the early childhood testing center is located in the old fire station building at Larkin High School. The building also could provide additional space for preschool classrooms or other uses in the long term, while the property is used as a remote bus parking lot, officials said.

The district has been leasing space on the property for 10 years to park bus drivers' personal vehicles. Officials said the plan is to move the district's fleet of buses there as early as next fall, which is expected to save \$1 million yearly in employee shuttling costs.

After closing on the sale, officials will begin designing and bidding out the parking lot renovation with the goal of completing the work before winter.

Interior renovation of the building -- constructed in 1965 and renovated in 2002 -- is expected to be completed over the next two years and could cost roughly \$4 million. Planning for that will be done this winter so work can begin by late winter or early spring of 2019, documents show.