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## *If You Build It . . .*



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We really never intended to comment on the Westport-Weston YMCA plan to move. How controversial could it be for a wealthy town to find a site and build a new Y? Well, plenty, it turns out. This is the famously contentious Westport, now in its 12th year of debate about this issue.

Westport's Y is a 75-year-old downtown landmark, now too old and small to serve its members' needs. So some time ago the board decided to build a new facility on land the Y already owns, known as Mahackeno. It's near the Merritt Parkway, a few miles north of downtown. Architects hired, models built, money raised. Done deal? Not so fast.

There is a large faction that has pushed to keep the Y downtown, convenient to all and located in the midst of Westport's lively shopping and restaurant scene. Sounds great, but where exactly? Lots and lots of study has gone into this question. One plan would have to move the police station. Another would take away the park that is used by dog owners and their charges. But these are town properties, and the Y is a private organization. So while the arguments, meetings, blogs, ads and political pressure continued, the board wisely moved ahead.

It sold the old building and agreed to vacate the premises in five years or less. Time enough to build that new facility on the Mahackeno property – which we would support with this unglamorous caveat: make sure the planned septic system will be safe and effective since the new Y will sit close to the Saugatuck River. If so, we say build it and they will come. Still arguing – this is Westport, after all – but they'll come.