

## Olds Ag Society Looks to Grow

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Big things are pretty common at the Olds Agricultural Society - big animals, big rodeos - and now the OAS is proposing to build a big expansion project that officials hope will help keep the town and the OAS on the map for years to come.

The \$8.5 million project calls for an additional 40,000 sq ft to be added on to the existing Caluori Pavilion that includes building a premier livestock facility, as well as a convention/banquet hall that will seat up to 900.

"It will be very much a multi-functional building that would attract everything from trade shows to weddings to boat sales, all happening at the same time," said OAS general manager, Tami Gardner.

With the Cow Palace nearly 30 years old and an absence of a commercial kitchen in other OAS buildings, Gardner said an expansion is long overdue.

More importantly, the new facilities would help to mitigate logistical problems of transporting animals across 54 St. that routinely impedes traffic.

"One of the difficulties that the Ag Society faces, not only at fairs, but certainly throughout the year, is the fact that our buildings are separated by 54 St," Gardner said.

"We want to try to position ourselves so that all of our livestock will be positioned on the south side of 54 St."

The plans have been in the works for a number of years. The OAS received a \$3.7 million grant from Alberta Lotteries earlier this year and while the OAS needs nearly another \$5 million, Gardner said she is confident the shortfall will be made up.

"We are confident in the support for the project within the community and certainly the research has been done over the course of last two and a half years that the need for the project exists and the support for the project also exists," she said.

Gardner said the OAS will be seeking public and private financial support and said construction of the new arena and stables could start as early as next year, depending on how much money is raised.

Plans for the banquet hall are still in the works and Gardner said the OAS is seeking community input from a variety of groups.

Charlotte Hogarth, chairperson of the physical committee for the project, said the more community input, the better.

"There are so many community groups in town that would probably benefit from this, so I think that we'll look at every crevice and corner so if something gets done here, the community has had some input," she said.

"Once the concept between what the Ag Society is put together and what the Chamber of Commerce is looking for in the community needs, the Chamber will definitely work hand in hand with the Olds Ag Society is making this come to a reality," said Victor Wolchansky [Chamber President].

For the complete story, contact the Olds Albertan.