

# Memphis Business Journal

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## Prairie Life plans three fitness centers in Memphis

Memphis Business Journal - by [Michael Sheffield](#)

In its first expansion outside the Midwest, Omaha, Neb.-based **Prairie Life Fitness Center** plans to build three new centers in the Memphis area, the first to be located in Collierville.

Local architecture and design firm Fisher & Arnold, Inc., is designing the Collierville facility and Memphis-based Inman Construction is general contractor. The Collierville center is expected to be open in spring 2005.

Mark Sweets, treasurer of Prairie Life Fitness Center, says the company sees Memphis as an underserved market and will bring a family atmosphere to the health club business.

He says the \$10 million, 63,555-square-foot Collierville center will eventually employ 200 full- and part-time employees. Sweets says membership costs have not been finalized yet.

"The market presented an opportunity to us, but the key will be full service for the family," he says. "Other gyms and health clubs don't include youth programs. That's the difference."

There are 32 fitness centers in the Memphis area, including eight YMCAs.

Prairie Life includes indoor and outdoor pools, a track, cardio room, full fitness and weight room, a full gym and a children's gym as well as a steam room, sauna and whirlpool. Sweets says most health clubs may include a nursery, but don't really give kids anything to do, whereas Prairie Life designs formal exercise programs for younger kids. He adds that Prairie Life membership fees include the costs of yoga and other classes, pilates and swimming lessons.

Sweets says the center also has programs designed for the fitness of children, which has become a hot topic lately.

"Fitness is something the entire family should focus on, and if parents and kids can go to the same place that is safe, fun and cost efficient, they're more likely to keep going," he says.

David Baker, director of design development for Fisher & Arnold, says Prairie Life has a design for its facilities, but his company was brought in to adapt the "Midwestern" design to fit Collierville.

"We worked out several scenarios and we think it'll work out well and fit right in," Baker says.

Sweets believes the family atmosphere of Prairie Life will do well in Memphis and looks forward to getting the first center open, so the company can focus on the next location.

"I think at the very least, we can be competitive in Memphis because of our encouragement of family memberships," he says. "This is our eighth facility, so we're pretty good at what we do. We just want to grow into

other markets."

Prairie Life Fitness Center currently has facilities in Omaha and Lincoln, Neb.; Kansas City, Kan.; and Des Moines, Iowa.

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