



Rutgers Hillel to unveil design of new building

Officials say funding for \$15 million site remains on target



An architectural drawing of the new \$15 million Rutgers Hillel student center obtained by *NJJN* in advance of Hillel's annual gala on June 1, where the design will be formally unveiled.

Photo courtesy Rutgers Hillel

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Hillel gala

The Hillel annual gala will be held Monday, June 1, 7-9:30 p.m. at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston. The cost is \$180 per person. For information or to RSVP, contact Rutgers Hillel at 732-545-2407 or info@rutgershillel.org.

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by [Debra Rubin](#)

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Rutgers Hillel is set to unveil the final architectural plans for its new \$15 million student center that will show an inviting building of stone, wood, and glass that leaders expect to become a hub of Jewish life in New Brunswick.

Those attending the June 1 gala at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston will also see an interactive 3-D video presentation about the new facility.

“I think people will see this as a beautiful building, welcoming and attractive sitting on one of the most prominent sites on campus,” said Rutgers Hillel director Andrew Getraer in a May 18 phone conversation. “It will make a powerful statement in terms of size and vitality, which is only fitting for a university with the third-largest Jewish student population in the country.”

Rutgers has about 5,000 undergraduate Jewish students and more than 1,000 graduate students on campus.

In an exclusive interview with *NJJN*, Hillel officials revealed other details of the new building to be erected at George Street and Bishop Place to replace Hillel’s cramped College Avenue site. Hillel expects to break ground next year and open the building the following year.

Getraer acknowledged these were “challenging times” to solicit support for the project because of the worsening economy, but added that almost \$6 million has been raised so far. “None of the current donors have pulled out or failed to make a payment,” he said. “Some donors have even increased donations or paid ahead of schedule.”

The lead donors are Audrey and Zygi Wilf of Springfield and Jane and Mark Wilf of Livingston, who were honored at last year’s dinner.

Getraer said the outside of the building will have ledges of stone, wood, glass, and other natural

materials, creating “a warm exterior with varied roof lines and varied depths that will make a large building feel warm and intimate rather than institutional.”

At a meeting with Getraer, development director Lee Rosenfield and capital campaign coordinator Barbara Cohen, Rosenfield described the site as “the gateway to the campus.”

The building was designed by Kann Partners of Baltimore, which also designed the Hillel at Johns Hopkins University and renovated the University of Maryland’s Hillel. It will incorporate green environmental features and an open atrium with a staircase to the second floor “creating a feeling of openness and light” but a “warm and homey” atmosphere as well, according to Getraer.

The four-story building will also contain a 400-seat kosher dining hall available for Hillel events and for rental by the general community. There will be prayer space for Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Sephardi communities, a kosher cafe, an Israel resource center, classrooms, and a computer lab.

“We feel this will be the finest Jewish student building in the country,” said Getraer. “College is the place where young adults make decisions that guide the rest of their lives. Hillel exists to help Jewish college students discover for themselves the value and meaning of being Jewish and the opportunity to be part of a Jewish community.

“This building will be a magnet for Jewish students and a place where they can explore and discover their Jewish identity, which will help shape our community’s future.”

At the June 1 dinner, Dr. Gary Steinbach, president of the Jewish Family & Vocational Service of Middlesex County, will receive the Rabbi Julius Funk Alumni award. Also to be honored are Hillel treasurer Robert Kuchner and his wife, Phyllis, of Westfield; Lee Livingston, president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County and his wife, Lanny, a member of the Hillel board; and Hillel vice president Philip Vinick and his wife, Gina Brod Vinick, of West Orange.

Students receiving rising stars awards are Hillel president Hilary Neher of South Orange, Hillel vice president Gabe Homa of Livingston, Jordana Ornstein of Elizabeth, and Zack Wilder of Mount Laurel.

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