

Made in the shade

A first look at designs for the Hebrew University's new humanities center.

By Noam Dvir

The Boston-based architect Michael McKinnell has been chosen to design the new Mandel Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, to be constructed at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Haaretz has received a simulated picture of the planned center, which is being published here for the first time.

The center will be built on the Mount Scopus campus and serve the research staff and advanced degree students from the five humanities schools now operating in the university.

The \$18 million donation to build the center came from the Mandel family of Cleveland, Ohio. According to the university, it is one of the most generous donations ever granted anywhere in the world for the encouragement of humanities studies. In addition, the family has promised, via the Mandel Family Foundation, a renewable grant of about \$2.5 million annually for study programs in the new center.

The construction of the center, from designs by Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, is expected to be completed about two years from now.



Michael McKinnell's design for the Mandel Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, to be constructed at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Photo by: Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects

The center will be built on a slope in the northern part of the campus, overlooking the Isawiyah neighborhood in East Jerusalem. It will include 6,000 square meters spread over five floors, and be accessed by means of a bridge that will connect the botanical gardens and the top floor of the building.

Inside the building there will be public spaces to be used for meetings of staff and students, along with offices, classrooms, meeting rooms and research rooms.

The England-born McKinnell describes the top floor of the building, which is on the campus level, as a "gift to the university." It will contain public services such as a cafeteria and an observation balcony open to the general public.

Outwardly the building presents a solid facade, composed of stone surfacing and transparent walls. There is special emphasis on the quality of the researchers' rooms. Although they are very modest in terms of size and design, each of them has a large, floor-to-ceiling window. The wide roof will extend from all sides of the building and cast a shadow on the glass perimeters on the top floor.

McKinnell's firm specializes in public and academic buildings. Previously it has designed several projects for the Mandel Foundation, including the Mandel Center for the Humanities at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. The firm became world famous thanks to Boston City Hall, an example of the brutalist style, constructed in 1969. The building became one of the most familiar icons of modern architecture in the United States.

In the past decade, the firm has focused on institutional projects, including the designing of courthouses and U.S. embassies worldwide. The present project in Jerusalem is being planned in conjunction with Asaf Lerman (A. Lerman Architects), which recently completed the renovation and expansion of the central library at the University of Haifa.

The Mandel Family Foundation was established by American Jewish brothers Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel of Cleveland, who in the 1950s established the Premier Industrial Corporation. The company was involved in electricity and electronics, and in 2006 merged with Farnell Electronics of London. Morton Mandel's fortune is estimated today at \$4 billion to \$5 billion.

The foundation's main objective is to develop leadership in public institutions worldwide. It is estimated that to date it has donated about \$300 million to various projects all over Israel.