

Perla Lichi Design Creates Chabad Space 'Conducive for Davening, Spirituality and Growth-Oriented Experiences'

Article on Squirrel Hill Chabad by Adam Reinherz, recently published in the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle, used with permission of the Chronicle.

POMPANO BEACH, FL, UNITED STATES,
September 22, 2025 /
EINPresswire.com/ -- By Adam Reinherz

Following more than 18 months of renovations, Chabad of Squirrel Hill's building is nearly complete and set to welcome generations of worshippers and learners. The remodel of the building on Beechwood Boulevard, which formerly housed New Light Congregation, emphasizes light and space.



New stained glass windows in Chabad of Squirrel Hill's renovated sanctuary

The photo at top right shows the new stained glass windows and custom cabinetry that provide the backdrop to Chabad of Squirrel Hill's renovated sanctuary. (Photo courtesy of Chabad of Squirrel Hill)

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Cohen pointed to a reworked ceiling, LED lighting, stained glass windows and lush carpeting ... and lauded the craftsmanship behind custom cabinetry holding several Torah scrolls and books.”

Jed Cohen, de facto Project Manager

The project involved a “major transformation,” according to Jed Cohen, a construction manager who participates in Chabad of Squirrel Hill programming. Months before Chabad entered into contract with G6 Builders, a Pittsburgh-based construction company, Cohen was tapped by Chabad’s co-Director Rabbi Yisroel Altein to serve as “de facto project manager.”

Cohen, who said he happily accepted Altein’s offer, interviewed contractors, negotiated bids, reviewed invoices, oversaw weekly inspections and prepared a

punch list of items that remain unfinished. Having seen the project to its near completion — a chandelier will be installed in the coming week, Altein said — Cohen is proud of the beautified space.

“For me personally, I like having a place of worship where I am comfortable, where I can worship and learn, and not just for me but for my family too,” he said. “My kids had a b’nei mitzvah there. I hope it’s a place that they can feel is a second home for them.”

Chabad’s connection to the building dates to 2017. At the time, Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh purchased the space from New Light for \$750,000. Following the sale, Chabad, which was meeting at Yeshiva Girls School on Denniston Street, relocated to the former New Light building. After Yeshiva obtained the former St. Rosalia site in Greenfield in 2021, “they offered us to buy [the former New Light building] dollar for dollar,” Altein said. “After they graciously sold us the building, we started exploring the renovations.”

Altein believes the newly refurbished center will better serve constituents thanks to several tweaks and reconfigurations. “The actual floor plan didn’t change but because of the way we renovated we can use the space more efficiently,” he said. Apart from doubling the kitchen size, “which will allow us to accommodate a lot more cooking and serving in the shul,” Chabad created a partition that enables the sanctuary and adjacent social hall to seamlessly flow regardless of the program size.

Chani Altein, Chabad’s co-director, said the partition was designed in a manner to support various events without noticeable distraction.

“When we need the full space it’s open, and it looks like that’s the way it was made to be. And when it’s closed or we want it to be closed, it looks that was the way it was made to be,” she said.

Chani Altein praised [Perla Lichi](#), of [Perla Lichi Design](#), for helping Chabad “create something that is warm, welcoming, light and airy.”

“The way she’s designed the room you feel peaceful and tranquil,” Chani Altein said. “It’s conducive for davening, spirituality and growth-oriented experiences.” Cohen pointed to a



reworked ceiling, LED lighting, stained glass windows and lush carpeting, which collectively brighten the interior, and lauded the craftsmanship behind custom cabinetry holding several Torah scrolls and books.

Chabad's new vestibule, which is lined in Jerusalem stone, is a "showpiece," he continued, and allows easy access to updated ADA-compliant bathrooms.

The building's second floor includes a "stately looking study" with a wet bar, couches, classrooms and a children's learning center, he said.

Community members were invited to see the nearly-completed project last month during an inauguration dinner honoring Dr. Stanley Marks. Yisroel Altein commended Marks, Robert Mallet, Yekusiel Kalmenson and several foundations for providing the encouragement and assistance to undertake the nearly \$2 million project: "There were a lot of generous people in the community who participated from as little as \$10 dollars to as much as tens of thousands. We really felt like this was a communitywide participation."

An April 22 event with guest speakers Menachem and Ayelet Kelmanson demonstrated, the "space is up and running," Altein said. "And while it's beautiful, it also has a warm welcoming feeling."

Maintaining that sense drove the project, he explained.

Construction was staged so that Chabad never had to "move out completely," he said.

Exterior work, including a new driveway, was completed during colder months. Interior work, which served as the bulk of the efforts, was undertaken in the spring and summer, thus allowing Chabad-goers to enjoy continued services and programming beneath erected tents in the property's backyard.

"One of the things that we learned during COVID is that you can never say we're shut down and we're done," Yisroel Altein said.

When in-person gatherings were restricted, "we went full force in Zoom. and did what we were able to, to the best that we were able to, because there's an importance in maintaining ongoing activities. Judaism doesn't take a break and we can't take a break. The more we can keep the flow going, the better off it is for people and for the organization."

Cohen, who saw more than 120 people enjoying last week's Kelmanson event inside Chabad's new space, said the project feels as though it's come "full circle."

"My family has had a Jewish presence in Pittsburgh for six generations. My great-great-grandfather was a chazan at Beth Shalom. Fast forward to my kids — Rabbi Altein officiated their

b'nei mitzvah in 2019. It's very important for me to have Jewish roots in our town," he said.

Increasing Jewish communal connection through warmth, substance and comfort is the key, Yisroel Altein said. "We want people to feel welcome here." PJC

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Read original article here: <https://jewishchronicle.timesofisrael.com/chabad-of-squirrel-hill-nears-completion-on-2m-remodel/>

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