

Rutgers Plans New Arts Center in Long Vacant Downtown Newark Department Store

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By Ted Sherman

The vacant Hahne & Co. department store in downtown Newark, now being redeveloped with a new Whole Foods supermarket, office space and rental apartments, will soon become a part of the city's arts community.

Rutgers University today approved a \$25 million plan to lease three floors of the sprawling building to provide studio, classroom and gallery space for campus arts programs, in partnership with Newark artists, schools and other institutions.

"We are really intent on making collaborative spaces with the community," said Rutgers Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor.

She said the project—to be called Express Newark—is expected to spark new shops, galleries and restaurant in the Halsey Street neighborhood that borders the Hahnes building.

"It will make a big difference," she said.

The university said it plans to use the new space as an arts incubator, with space for a communications media center, a print shop, portrait studio, lecture hall and and gallery space. Cantor said the building will also host the university's Institute of Jazz Studies.

The chancellor said among some of the community organizations that will be collaborating with the university include the Newark Museum, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Gallery Aferro, Newark Print Shop, GlassRoots, and WBGO. Rutgers is taking 57,000 square feet of the 440,000-square-foot building.

Built in 1901, the Hahne & Co.—fronting Newark's Military Park—served as the retailer's flagship store before it finally closed in 1986. The building, listed on state and national registers of historic places, has been vacant ever since.

The Hahne's building has been eyed for a variety of rehabilitation plans since the 1990s by a series of developers, including luxury apartments and revitalized retail space. But construction of the new 20-story Prudential office tower a block south on Broad Street gave a new spark to the project.

The former store was purchased last year by Newark-based Hanini Group in partnership with L+M Development, and, Whole Foods Market signed a lease for a 29,000-square-foot supermarket on the ground floor.

The Rutgers board of governors, in its action today, authorized the spending of \$25 million on the Express Newark project, contingent on securing approximately \$8 million from various incentive programs.

Cantor expects Rutgers will be able to move into the new space in 2016.

"We aspire for Express Newark to play a pivotal role as a 'third space,' where the university and community come together to advance scholarship, strengthen our community," she said.

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2014/10/rutgers_plans_new_arts_center_in_long_vacant_downtown_newark_department_store.html