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# Fund-raising continues for children's museum

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Plans for the new Children's Museum on Central New Jersey are still on track.

"The outlook is very bright," CMCNJ Board of Trustees President Kelly Deere said.

The nonprofit is in lease negotiations with the Liberty Hall Foundation in Union and hopes to have a lease signed within the next six months, she said.

After the lease is signed, Deere said, the capital campaign to raise the big bucks necessary to construct the new 43,000-square-foot museum will really begin.

"You don't really start doing that kind of fundraising until you have all of your ducks in a row," Deere said.

It's kind of hard to ask for large financial contributions without a lease, she said.

Freeholder Angel Estrada, who also serves on the CMCNJ Board of Trustees, said that the Union location for the museum is ideal.

Last week, the organization honored its five "Angel Donors," who pledged \$5,000 and unveiled the first renderings of some of the proposed exhibits.

In 2003, the project was projected to cost \$12 million to complete. That

same year, the group received a \$1 million from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders to get the ball rolling. The grant was made possible through the county's Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund and was paid in \$250,000 installments over an 18-month period.

From there, architects specializing in the construction of children's museums, planners, and strategic analysts have been hired, and renderings of the proposed structure have been completed.

As for the actual building, Deere said planners are envisioning a "museum complex," which will incorporate the Liberty House Museum, the children's museum, and the Fire House Museum, which is scheduled to open in late June. The children's museum is tentatively schedule to be completed by December 2010.

Above all, Deere said the museum, which will house 20 different exhibits, will be a place where families can interact together.

The "layered" exhibits can accommodate newborns to kids as old as 12, Deere said, with special emphasis on children ages 2 to 8.

Estrada also said the museum will reflect current research that indicates that children learn more in their early

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## Museum plans hands-on exhibits

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years then previously thought.

All of the exhibits will have a focus on the state of New Jersey, she said.

Deere explained that while the Board of Trustees conducted research, in the form of focus groups, findings indicated that youngsters knew little about New Jersey or its history.

A Town Center exhibit will mirror

the literal town centers of communities, with "everything you can think of," Deere said.

Of course, everything will be child-sized, and allow children to touch, pull, push, open and close various doors, windows, and the like.

Other exhibits include All Aboard, which looks at mass transit; Down the Shore, which will have water and sand

as well as some ocean life; and the Garden State Farm complete with animals and plants.

Deere also added that all the exhibits will fall in line with New Jersey curriculum standards.

To learn more about the Children's Museum of New Jersey, call 908-389-0372 or you may visit [www.cmcnj.org](http://www.cmcnj.org).