

LILLIAN AND ALBERT SMALL  
**CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM**



**A NEW  
MUSEUM  
FOR THE  
NATION'S  
CAPITAL**





“I want to thank all of you who have risen to the occasion, both philanthropically and actively. Our community, both Jews and non-Jews, owes you all a big debt of gratitude... ‘It takes a shtetl!’”

**Albert H. Small, Jr**

Congressman Jamie Raskin (D-MD) Hanging the Mezuzah. Photo: Daniel Swartz Photography

A *mezuzah* is a parcel — often small — that is affixed to the doorway of Jewish homes. It is traditionally filled with a scroll of parchment that contains verses from the Torah inscribed on it, including the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21), the most important prayer in Judaism.

Some people believe that the mezuzah provides special protection over the inhabitants of the home where it hangs.

Board President Esther Safran Foer selected the bronze mezuzah, designed by MI POLIN, featuring botanical elements from the landscape of Trachimbrod/Trochenbrod, Ukraine, once home to Foer’s ancestors and a large Jewish community.

Cover Image: Detail of a mural painted on plaster in the Shomrei Shabbos synagogue on M Street, NW, ca. 1925-1930, in a building used by a succession of Jewish and Christian organizations and, later, as a private residence. Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Black Rock Holdings, LLC.

Museum's Executive Committee of the Board: (l-r) Alexandra Horowitz, Stuart Zuckerman, Sherry Bindeman Kahn, Eugene Sofer, Marlene Singer, Christopher Wolf, Esther Safran Foer, and Albert H. Small, Jr. at an opening celebration for the new museum, June 6, 2023. Photo: Ron Sachs/CNP



After more than a dozen years of dreaming and planning, the Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum is *open*.

The Museum tells the story of Jewish Life in the National Capital Region and provides a space for important conversations about the issues affecting the Jewish experience locally and globally. Anchored by Adas Israel Congregation's original historic synagogue erected in 1876, the Museum features a chronological history of the Jewish experience in the Washington region. Our core exhibition, *Connect. Reflect. Act.* explores stories, past and present, of Jewish life in Washington, complemented by the Community Action Lab — our maker, activation space — where inspiration becomes action. The visitor experience is rounded out by our special exhibition gallery on the third floor.

I am so grateful for the dynamic vision and generous support of so many of you. Because of you, the dream of the Capital Jewish Museum is now a reality.

I invite you to come for the first time, come back again, and bring family and friends. We want to share the reality of our dream with you all.

Most sincerely,

Esther Safran Foer  
President of the Board of Directors





“Through many years, Museum staffers, colleagues from the former Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, scholars, community members, philanthropists, architects, and designers have worked to create a space that is worthy of the stories we have to tell and engages and welcomes visitors of all backgrounds. We are immensely proud to celebrate the region’s Jewish history and culture, as well as to look history squarely in the eye. We all need to be part of repairing the world and we hope the Museum does its part to spark that reflection and action.”

**Ivy L. Barsky, Executive Director**

“[The Museum] means more children in DC will grow up learning the long and important history of Jewish families, congregations, and businesses in our community... That history — and present day — includes an unwavering commitment to social justice and activism. It includes many families, like mine, that have been in Washington, DC for multiple generations and are now building a future here too.”

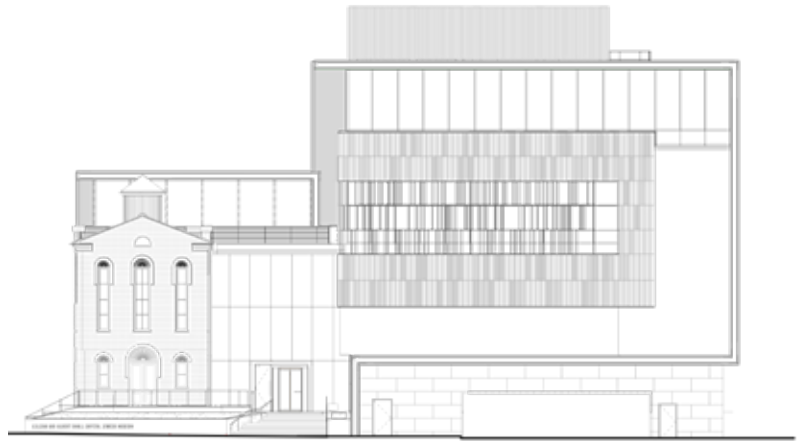
**Mayor Muriel Bowser**



# Architecture

“The Capital Jewish Museum’s design celebrates the connection of old and new, showcasing the 1876 synagogue as the Museum’s most prominent artifact. The design elevates the historic landmark structure on a plinth and importantly, rotates it in the correct East-West orientation.

The idea of connecting the past and the present was an overarching design goal. This is evident in the materiality of the project. The simple materials of the synagogue — brick, glass, wood, and metal — are mirrored with their modern counterparts. The wood flooring inside the sanctuary reemerges in the form of wood slat ceilings and wall panels. On the exterior, the varying vintages of the synagogue’s brick are reinterpreted in the new building with a richly textured facade of terracotta panels and baguettes. The tall arched windows become the double height curtain



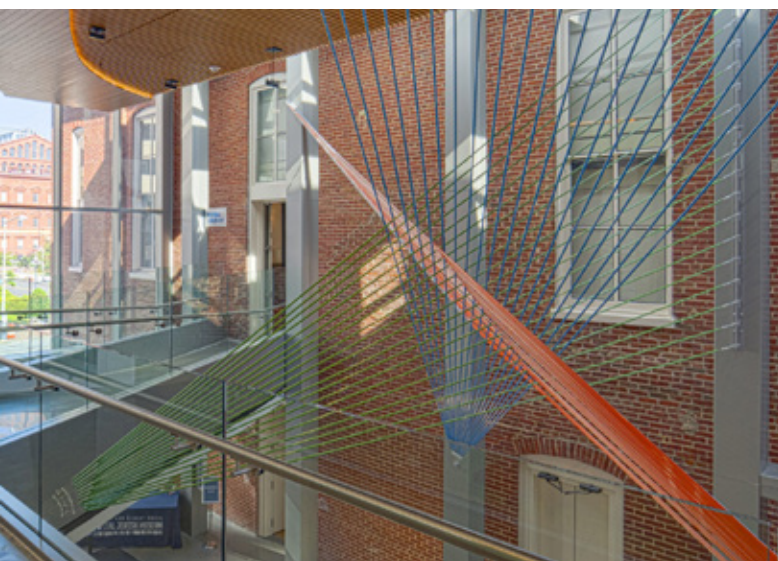
walls of the lobby and the pitched metal roof of the synagogue is reborn as a red ribbon of aluminum panels that wraps around the edges of the new addition.”

Bettina Neudert-Brown, Lead Architect  
SmithGroup

## Signature Spaces



Webber and Hyman Families Third Floor Lobby  
featuring the restored Star of David window  
(ca. 1950) from the former Hebrew Home for the  
Aged. Photos: Imagine Photography



Situated at the center of the Museum, in the Howard Morse, Laura Loeb and Family lobby atrium—and figuratively connecting the past to the present — Zachary Oxman’s sculpture represents the Museum’s mission to connect, reflect, and act. Three sets of tubes — each anchored to both the synagogue and the new building — traverse the space, representing the intersection of communities, stories, and identity. As visitors move through the Museum our perspective of the work continues to change, as our understanding of history evolves.

Zachary Oxman, *Intersections*, 2023 (view from  
second floor). Gift of Howard and Geraldine  
Pollinger Foundation.

# Historic Synagogue

## 1975

Historic synagogue is dedicated by the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington and opened to the public as the Lillian and Albert Small Jewish Museum.

## 1876

June 9, 1876 Adas Israel Congregation dedicates their synagogue, the first purpose-built synagogue building in the District of Columbia.

## 1908

Adas Israel sells the building and moves to 6th & I Sts., NW.

## 1968

The historic synagogue is placed on the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites.

## 1972

Lillian and Albert Small make a major contribution to restore the synagogue. The museum within the historic building will be named in their honor.

## 1967

The historic synagogue (owned by the Washington Metro Transit Authority) is threatened with demolition as Metro prepares to build a new headquarters. Advocates rally to find financing and government permission to move the building to a new location.

## 1969

Synagogue added to the National Register of Historic Places and included in the Historic American Buildings Survey.



December 18, 1969 Historic Adas Israel synagogue moved three blocks from its original location at the southeast corner of 6th and G Streets, NW, to 3rd and G Streets, NW. Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Henry Brylawski.



# 2019



January 9, 2019 Historic synagogue is moved for the final time to the corner of 3rd and F Streets, NW.

Photo: Ron Sachs/CNP

# 2016

The historic synagogue is moved to a temporary location in preparation for construction and redevelopment.

# 2020

September 14, 2020 Groundbreaking for the new museum.

# 2010

The historic synagogue is again in the way of urban development, in this case plans for the re-decking of Interstate 395. Plans are made to move the building and build a larger museum.

# 2023



June 9, 2023 The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum opens to the general public. Ceremonial ribbon cutting on June 6 with (l-r) Marshall B. Small, Tina Small, Albert H. Small, Jr., Esther Safran Foer, Mayor Muriel Bowser, and Albert N. Small.

Photo: Daniel Swartz Photography

# What is Jewish Washington?



Interior view of *What is Jewish Washington?* with the synagogue model in the foreground. Carolyn S. Alper Gallery.



The exhibition *What is Jewish Washington?* explores the diverse Jewish communities of DC and the suburbs of Maryland and Northern Virginia, from 1790 through today. The chronological presentation features photographs, objects, stories and excerpts from oral histories — most drawn from the Museum’s collection. Familiar museum tools — timelines, maps, and demographic statistics — place the history of Jewish Washington in the wider context of DC and US history.

*What is Jewish Washington?* introduces a variety of themes that appear throughout the Museum: immigration, assimilation, living as a minority, antisemitism, small business ownership, real estate development, government service, a working-to-middle-class trajectory, connection to Israel, suburbanization and white flight, affinity for the Civil Rights movement, and much more.

An interactive model of the historic synagogue invites visitors to open doors and peek through windows to learn the history of the building and its many uses over time.

# Historic Sanctuary



Historic Sanctuary with video presentation.

The restored and historic sanctuary serves as a backdrop for an immersive “memoryscape,” which depicts highlights of Jewish life in Washington in the late-19th century with a focus on the founding of the city’s first congregations — Washington Hebrew Congregation (1852) and Adas Israel Congregation (1869).

The film transports visitors to 1876 with period music, narration, and visuals using excerpts from primary documents, historical maps, and photographs. Visitors can view the film while seated on the gallery’s five historic pews from three early synagogues. In the front of the sanctuary hangs the *ner tamid* (eternal light) donated to Washington Hebrew Congregation when it was in its first building on 8th Street, NW.





Photos: Imagine Photography

## Connect. Reflect. Act.

Following the chronological presentation of *What is Jewish Washington?* this core exhibition explores themes of community and controversy while considering one's own values and reflecting on what this history means to you. The exhibition provides opportunities to engage with the material and each other through conversation tables, large "identity cubes," and an interactive map.

In *Am Yisrael Chai* (The Jewish People Live!) visitors encounter a wall of photographs and artifacts related to 100 Jewish residents of the greater Washington region. Some of them will be familiar, and others a new introduction. Each is profiled on a soft cube with a photo and three words that describe them. Everyone has several identities, reflecting the varied ways we all live and express ourselves.

The main focus of *Kehillah* (Community) is a 10' interactive map table where visitors trace Jewish Washington over time. The surrounding display presents images and artifacts

highlighting the various places around the region where Jewish Washingtonians have gathered to form community: play, live, learn, eat, worship, and work.

The *Tikkun Olam* (Repair the World) section delves into six important issues facing our world: antisemitism; elusive peace in Israel; the environment; immigration; reproductive rights; and voting rights. In special interactive "pods," visitors learn about Jewish responses to these issues while engaging with the subjects themselves.

In *Welcome to Our Seder*, an interactive seder table is at the center of a presentation of stories and events in Washington history that relate to the theme of liberation, including the Exodus ship (1947); Freedom Seder (1969); and the Soviet Jewry and Ethiopian Jewry's "Let my people go" movements. Visitors sit at the table, learn about key events, and then answer a series of provocative questions and compare their answers with other seated visitors.

## Community Action Lab

The Community Action Lab invites visitors of all ages to deepen their engagement through hands-on activities, resources, workshops, games, and more. Building on the themes and ideas explored in the exhibitions and programs, inspiration becomes action. Since opening, the Lab has hosted drop in poster making activities, workshops with artists, family storytime, and more.



# In The News: Twenty-Five Major News Stories in the First Month



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## The Washington Post

### Outsiders, strivers: New museum presents complex story of D.C. region's Jews

By Michelle Boorstein  
May 26, 2023

Putting together the first-ever museum about Jews of the D.C. region, curators had to answer: What is the community's historical narrative? Is it represented by famous figures like the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and vice-presidential candidate Joe Lieberman, or by average citizens like the dry cleaner or the government office worker?

The creators of the Capital Jewish Museum, which opens June 9, concluded that Jewish life in D.C. sits at the crossroads of those two worlds, and includes dry cleaner Robert Rosenfeld, who happened to repair first lady Lady Bird Johnson's brown leather gloves, and IRS manager Arthur Altman (wonk) famous for simplifying the W-4 tax form.

"That's the crux of this whole museum, that Washington is a local place with a regional community of people, but it's also national and even international. And how the Jewish community here intersects with that continued effort to invent democracy," said museum curator Sarah Leavitt. "The story isn't one narrative."



A wall of political slogans is part of the Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum, the first museum in D.C. dedicated to the story of Jewish life in the nation's capital.






# Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg

On May 23, 2023, we were honored to host a preview of our inaugural special exhibition, *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, created by the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, in partnership with the book's co-authors, Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik. Highlighting Justice Ginsburg's commitment to our nation's highest ideals, the exhibition invites visitors to participate in civic life and consider how the future of the Supreme Court affects us all. The evening also included a musical performance paying homage to RBG's love of opera. It was an honor to be the final stop for this traveling exhibition, and our celebration was a wonderful kick-off to our many opening events honoring those that made this milestone possible.

A special thanks to the sponsors of the exhibition:

Presented by  PNC

Major support provided by Events DC

Generous support provided by Cooley; Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP; Stuart S. Kurlander/Latham & Watkins; Levy Firestone Muse LLP; and Wiley Rein LLP. Additional support provided by Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC; Deloitte; Georgetown Law School; Hogan Lovells US LLP; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; and Weiner Brodsky PC.

## Notorious RBG Event Committee

Nancy Robinson Breuer, Co-Chair; Sherry Bindeman Kahn, Co-Chair; Nancy Alper; Ivy Barsky; Meg Flax; Sam Flax; Esther Safran Foer; Stuart Kurlander; Howard Morse; Gene Sofer; Christie Weiss; Jeff Weiss; Christopher Wolf.

Exhibition organized and circulated by the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles.

Photos: Imagine Photography. Left Middle: David Kahn, Sherry Bindeman Kahn, Nancy Robinson Breuer, and Lanny Breuer. Left Bottom: Melissa Hausfeld and Sara Brenner.



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Councilmember Brooke Pinto, David Fisher, Attorney General Brian Schwalb, and Nancy Alper. Photos: Imagine Photography

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Through their collective expertise and unwavering commitment, the Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum's staff and Board of Directors play integral roles in bringing our exhibitions and programs to life, enriching our community with meaningful connections to Jewish history and culture.

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*With gratitude for their vision in creating the Museum and its exhibitions, we are indebted to Kara Blond, Michelle Ellis, Rebekah Sobel, and Wendy Turman.*

*For their work in developing the core exhibitions: Laura Cohen Apfelbaum; Christiane Bauer; Stephanie Fry; Gabriel Goldstein; Zachary Paul Levine; CJM interns and volunteers; Content Advisory Committee; CJM Content Charettes; CJM Board of Directors and Content Committee*

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