

# Yeshiva High School undergoes major expansion

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Randy Blair, left, and Rabbi Gavriel Goetz, right, in the second-floor dormitory of the new Yeshiva High School building.  
Courtesy of Jewish News

Since 2010, when it was founded by Rabbi Gavriel Goetz and Rabbi Yossie Semel, Yeshiva High School of Arizona has provided Jewish young men from across the Valley with a place for learning, community and personal and professional development.

“We get our kids ready for the future in both their Jewish life and their professional life,” Goetz said.

Boasting a state-of-the-art dual curriculum in both general knowledge and Torah studies, the only thing holding the school back over the last 16 years has been adequate space to host more students, programs and community events.

The school found its current home on 12th Street in Phoenix in 2018, and until now, it was just that — a home.

The house was repurposed so that bedrooms became classrooms and the largest room became a sanctuary, but according to Goetz, “We knew we were going to grow out of it, that we would need more space for the students.”

The sanctuary was too small for large gatherings; there was no space for a dining room to host Shabbat dinners and limited classroom space inhibited growth of the student body, so over the last four years, the school has been raising funds for a major expansion.

“We’re adding a big dining room so we can all have Shabbos together, with the students, the rebbe, the teachers and the families,” Goetz said.

The expansion extends both the left and right sides of the school, as well as the back. Some of the original house will remain, but once construction is finished, the school will have a much larger sanctuary, larger classrooms and an upstairs dormitory for students to stay overnight.

The current capacity of 50 students is expected to more than double.

“The whole thing is designed to maximize light and space for the students,” Goetz said. “Before, we were cramped, and this is really going to help expand the school so that we can reach more people.”

Though the sanctuary is mostly new, it was important to both the students and the contractor to retain much of the feeling of the previous one.

“It was really beautiful before, with a lot of warmth in the room,” said Randy Blair, superintendent at Redden Construction.

The new sanctuary will mimic the old one's exposed tongue-and-groove ceiling, adding extra space for the ark. Keeping the same look as before was more expensive, but all parties felt it was worth the extra cost.

In addition to some of the original house, the basketball court and sports field in the backyard will not be touched. Blair's team is even adding two more outdoor floodlights to be able to use the backyard amenities after dark as well.

The new building will have all-new air conditioning, electrical, lighting, drinking fountains and bathrooms, including four shower stalls within the upstairs dormitory area. The dormitory will allow students to stay overnight on Shabbat or if their parents are too busy to pick them up every day.

"If they live elsewhere in the Greater Phoenix area, they could stay here overnight to learn and study," Goetz said. "Parents tell me all the time that they have long hours and it's hard for them."

Construction began late in the 2025-26 school year.

"Randy worked with us to ensure the students had their classrooms until the very last day," Goetz said. "The plan was to try to finish over the summer, but unforeseen things came up."

Most unforeseen issues came from having to remodel the old building, and school codes prevent students from moving back in until the project is complete and inspected for safety, so with the new school year beginning in late August, the school has relocated to a different shul in Glendale for the time being.

"We are doing as much as we can as fast as we can," said Blair. "We're very conscientious of the timeline and budget."

Students have been able to visit the site during the last few months, and some even started building a treehouse next to the building with extra materials.

"They're so excited to get in here," Goetz said. "As soon as this is ready for us, we're going to barge right back in."

Goetz estimated the project would cost a total of \$3.5 million. So far, he has raised \$2.5 million from donors, matchers and community members, and he has a number of ideas to raise the last million.

Blair could not share an expected completion date, but with wall finishes and tiling the upstairs bathrooms on the agenda for this month, construction continues along. **JN**

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