

L E M P E R T  
F A M I L Y  
F O U N D A T I O N

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**A NEW JEWISH MEMORIAL FOR ORADEA**

This proposal concerns the creation of a commemorative memorial in Oradea designed to memorialize the lives, contributions and ultimate fate of the Jewish people of the city who were deported from there to Auschwitz between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1944.

The memorial will be designed to appeal to all inhabitants of the city. Even-handed in its approach to communicating the relevant events of the past, the memorial will acknowledge difficult truths while it promotes contemplation and understanding of many positive aspects of the city's history. It will draw attention to those institutions, past and present, which resulted from the efforts of Jewish people working in harmony with their neighbors. Before World War II, the city was home to about 90,000 people, one-third of them Jewish. The city thrived and bustled in its diversity, owing much to what was perhaps the most commercially and culturally active Jewish community in the region. Today there are only several hundred Jewish people living in Oradea, so the proposed memorial is designed for the people of the city -- and especially its children -- as a new place for them to spend time in a vibrant, positive setting, with each other, with their families and with aspects of the past of their city. It will also serve as a new attraction for tourists, journalists and other groups, resulting in many lasting benefits to the city.

**Support for the project**

The effort to create the new memorial has been initiated by a steering committee (SC) of individuals from North America with strong ties to the city of Oradea. Three committee members were born in Oradea and emigrated with their families in the 1960's. A fourth member recently spent two years in Oradea as a volunteer in the Peace Corps program. Besides telephone calls and correspondence, the members visited the city three times in the past two years and met with a number of individuals and organizations for the purpose of discussing the idea of the memorial. On these occasions it was concluded that there was support for this project from various sides, including The Jewish Community of Oradea (JCO), The Jewish Federation of Romania (JFR),

local authorities and county officials, museum officials, church leaders of different denominations, teachers and academics, and community organizations.

We envision working in partnership with the City and the Jewish Community, and welcome the possibility of partnerships with other institutions. .

### **Funding**

Responsibility for funding the design, development and construction of the memorial will be assumed by the Lempert Family Foundation (LFF), a U.S. not-for-profit corporation established by Mr. Norbert Lempert in 1998. This private foundation received its Certificate of Incorporation from the State of New York, under section 402 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law; it received its Recognition of Exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

LFF, working with the project steering committee, plans to solicit financial and other support from the international community, including in particular the large number of Oradean émigrés living in North America, Europe and Israel.

LFF has undertaken the conceptualization of the project and production of a feature documentary to tell the story of the new Oradea Jewish Memorial: the effort behind its creation and the history underlying the need for it. The meetings, events, etc., described below will be filmed for use in the production of the documentary.

### **Location**

After visiting and considering several potential sites, the steering committee proposes that the new memorial be sited in the Eastern part of Balcescu Park – the exact description and the relevant map to be provided by the municipality.

We found this site to be appropriate for several reasons, the following being the most important ones:

- The site is adjacent to places important to the people of city, including in particular its children. It is in close proximity to Balcescu Park, the Zoo and an athletic stadium.
- Historically, Balcescu Park was the site from which the Jewish population was deported over the course of ten days between May and June 1944, in trains

running on tracks that are situated underground beneath the water pipes there at present. These tracks can be seen from the proposed site, and it might be possible to incorporate them into the memorial in some fashion.

- In comparison to other locations discussed, a memorial sited in this one will not compete for people' s attention with other nearby monuments and attractions.

### **Process**

We foresee taking the steps below toward project completion once this proposal has been approved by city authorities.

A Formal Partnership will be established between JCO, the Municipality, SC/LFF and potential parties of interest. Each party will designate an individual to serve as liaison. The project budget, specific tasks, steps and responsibilities will be discussed during meetings/conference calls of the parties. The partnership will establish a step-by-step plan, designed to assure project completion by June 2004.

For the purpose of meeting legal and other requirements of both the US and of Romania concerning the international transfer of funds and other administrative issues, the LFF will either (a) establish a relationship with an existing NGO in Oradea or (b) create a sister Foundation in Oradea.

The SC will draft an open letter for publication in Oradea newspapers describing the newly formed partnership between the JCO, the City, and LFF for the purpose of creating the new memorial. This letter will be approved and signed by each of these parties. This letter will also be used by the SC to solicit support for the project by the international community.

The Partnership will develop a plan (a) for promoting the design contest and ensuring that qualified individuals participate in it and (b) for establishing a blue ribbon jury for judging the entries and selecting the winning design.

The SC will draft for approval by the partnership a Memorial Portfolio Web site, for use by individuals and organizations taking part in the memorial design contest. This Web site will consist of historical narratives, photos, texts and other artifacts from the period.

The Web site will be made available to contestants; designs will be developed and submitted to the Partnership; the Jury will make its decision and the Partnership will approve it.

Completion of the Memorial must be scheduled so that it can be unveiled in May or June 2004 at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deportations.

For the Oradea Jewish Memorial Project Steering Committee

Norbert Lempert

Susana (Simonovits) Geroe

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