

# New York Hospital sacrificed for an Israel-backed Science Facility

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by **Terri Ginsberg**



A New York science campus will be jointly overseen by Israel's Technion university, which has developed technology used in Caterpillar bulldozers used to destroy Palestinian homes.

([Oren Ziv](#) / [ActiveStills](#))

Despite critical opposition from residents and their supporters, plans are proceeding unimpeded to build a multi-billion dollar campus linking an Israeli and an American university in [New York City](#).

The applied sciences university campus, Cornell NYC Tech, is to be located on tiny Roosevelt Island, a narrow strip of land in the East River dividing Manhattan from three of New York's outer boroughs.

The Cornell NYC Tech project is jointly overseen by [Cornell University](#) and the Israeli Institute of Technology — better known as the [Technion](#) — in [Haifa](#) and will eventually sit on 12 acres, or 2.1 million square feet, of Roosevelt Island's south end. A temporary campus will open in January 2013 at Google's New York headquarters in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, where the nascent university will operate until 2017, when completion is expected of its first leg of construction, a "net-zero energy" building to be designed by Thom Mayne of Morphosis Architects.

On 15 October, New York City began the seven-month uniform land use review procedure (ULURP) that will initiate a public review of Cornell NYC Tech's master plan, including an environmental impact statement, by the City Planning Commission.

Cornell NYC Tech will ultimately cost developers \$2 billion, including \$350 million in start-up costs supplied by Cornell alumnus Charles Feeney, a wealthy philanthropist, and \$100 million in New York taxpayer funds allocated freely last year by Michael Bloomberg, the city's mayor ("[Cornell alumnus is behind \\$350 billion gift to build science school in City](#)," *The New York Times*, 19 December 2011).

Feeney is often praised in the mainstream media for his philanthropy. This is particularly the case in Ireland, where Feeney has supported the country's universities, as well as to community groups ("[Universities honour their 'Renaissance man' Feeney](#)," *The Irish Times*, 7 September 2012).

## Troubling questions

Critics of the Cornell NYC Tech project surmise that Feeney's mega-grant helped push through the Cornell-Technion Partnership's comparatively late bid with the New York City Economic Development Corporation to build the proposed Roosevelt Island campus.

NYCEDC awarded the project to Cornell NYC Tech rather than to Stanford University, in potential partnership with the City College of New York, after Stanford pulled out of negotiations at the last minute.

The circumstances of Stanford's withdrawal, and of the seeming fast-tracking of a deal involving Cornell and the Technion, remain mysterious and raise disturbing questions about Cornell NYC Tech (see "[Alliance formed secretly to win deal for campus,](#)" *The New York Times*, 25 December 2011). These questions have been made all the more troubling in light of NYCEDC's recent move to prevent Stanford from making its own bid public ("[Why does NYC refuse to allow Stanford University to publicly release details of its withdrawn proposal for Roosevelt Island NYC Applied Sciences & Engineering School?](#)," *Roosevelt Islander*, 31 July 2012).

## Military links

The Cornell NYC Tech project has been loudly criticized for its institutional implication in international law violations.

The Technion, Israel's premier high-tech university, is [heavily involved in the research and development of drones, weapons manufacture, communications surveillance technology and Caterpillar D-9 bulldozers](#) — the kind used to kill US peace activist [Rachel Corrie](#) — and used to [demolish many thousands of Palestinian homes](#) and public buildings.

These research areas are directly tied to Israeli military activities which violate international humanitarian charters and resolutions, including the Geneva Conventions, laws against breaches of human rights, and laws against [apartheid](#) and [ethnic cleansing](#). Cornell NYC Tech has already announced that it will engage in dry laboratory manufacturing, mainly robotics, as well as communications development, but the pertinent details have not been released. This is despite claims of transparency from Cornell representatives and some of the project's supporters, including Nicholas Viest, President of Roosevelt Island's Community Board 8.

To make way for the new campus, New York City has arranged to demolish Coler-Goldwater Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility, a 2,000-bed, long-term comprehensive care facility in operation since the Franklin D. Roosevelt era, in January 2014 ("[Hospital patients forced out as Roosevelt Island tech campus moves in,](#)" DNAinfo, 3 May 2012).

Plans to move the hospital's patients to other facilities, some of them still in the proposal stage, have been blocked temporarily by East Harlem area residents, represented by Community Board 11, who are concerned they will not be permitted to live or work in the prospective facilities initially slated to be built — following more demolition and displacement — in their neighborhood.

Should new homes not be found for Coler-Goldwater patients by their mandatory evacuation dates in mid-2013, many of them (those who are US non-citizens holding temporary visas)

may face deportation, according to a Coler-Goldwater resident spokesperson.

Cornell NYC Tech is not scheduled for completion until 2037. Until then, Roosevelt Islanders will be faced with 30 years of noise, potentially hazardous dust, and heavy construction traffic as well as a likely, permanent increase in security and police presence on the island. These are conditions which many New Yorkers are greeting with displeasure and concern.

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