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New Hyde Park Young Israel Gets OK To Build Ritual Bath

by Amy Lotven, Chronicle Reporter

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Young Israel Synagogue in New Hyde Park received permission from CB 13 last week to expand its building to include a mikvah. (photo by Anthony Correia)

Community Board 13 last week overwhelmingly approved a local synagogue's request to construct a ritual bath.

Young Israel, located at 264-15 77th Avenue, plans to expand its one-story building to include a 1,000-square-foot mikvah room.

Mikvah Committee Chairman Larry Barth said a "mikvah" is a small pool used for ritual purifications processes. Women use the bath after their menstruation cycle.

The pool is made up of a combination of natural rain and city water. At Young Israel, the rain will be collected in a vessel on the roof of the temple and piped down into a second small pool. There it will mix with the city water and will eventually be piped into the mikvah.

The demand for a mikvah in the neighborhood has grown steadily, especially since Orthodox Jews do not drive during the Sabbath, and the nearest bath is seven miles away.

The baths have always been popular among Orthodox Jewish women, but have reportedly seen a resurgence even among the less observant set. And according to a recent article on the web site Chabad.org, while traditional mikvahs are rather nondescript, a trend has seen more lavish, almost spa-like bath areas.

Barth said Young Israel's mikvah will be "middle of the road." He did not reveal the price of the expansion, but said it will be the most expensive construction the synagogue has seen.

Young Israel is raising money for the project through donations and fund-raising events.

The proposal now goes to the Borough President's Office for approval.

On July 3rd, the Mikvah Committee will hold a block party, with bands and other entertainment and activities, from 4 to 9 p.m.