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On May 1, 2015, the Hitchcock Center for the Environment will break ground for a world-class environmental center designed and constructed to the world's toughest standards for sustainable development.

The 9000 square-foot Center will be New England's first public environmental education facility to join the [Living Building Challenge™](#), 20 performance standards that require buildings to be self-sufficient for energy and water, to meet strict requirements for green materials, and for the quality of indoor environment. Worldwide, fewer than ten buildings have been fully certified as living buildings.

Speakers include Senator Stanley Rosenberg, Representative Ellen Story, Acting Commissioner Dan Burgess of the MA Department of Energy Resources, Jonathan Lash, President of Hampshire College and other community representatives.

Sited on Hampshire College land just 2.5 miles from its current location on Route 116, the new Center will be situated at the top of the hayfield between Hampshire's Red Barn and Farm Center with access to miles of trails and a variety of ecological habitats. The building itself is intended as a teaching and learning tool that invites visitors to engage with ecological principles throughout the building and landscape.

"We are deeply committed to the philosophy and framework of the Challenge as an amplification of our educational mission," says Julie Johnson, executive director of the Hitchcock Center. "The process will transform how we think about design and construction as an opportunity to benefit both the environment and community life."

Founded in 1962, the Hitchcock Center for the Environment fosters awareness and understanding of our environment through programs with a particular focus on children, who live in a world of environmental challenges.

Currently based in a rustic carriage house located on the Larch Hill Conservation Area in Amherst, the existing facility cannot be expanded due to wetlands and other site constraints, yet the number of participants in educational programs has more than doubled in the past decade.

To keep pace with current and future demand, the new living building and its landscapes will allow Hitchcock to strengthen existing programs while creating new ones to meet the complex environmental challenges of the 21st Century. By 2020, annual program participation is estimated to grow from 8,500 to 11,500 children, youth and adults through augmented programs to underserved communities, strengthened programs focused on the child-nature connection, more in-depth naturalist and citizen science programs, and enhanced K-12 curriculum focused on sustainability.

On April 17, the Hitchcock Center and Hampshire College officially executed a ground lease agreement that secured the Center's new home for the next 95 years. The Hitchcock Center, which remains independent, plans to complete its new building in time for its fall 2016 programming.

A 5.8-million dollar capital campaign will fund the new Center. *Building for the Future*: a Campaign for the Hitchcock Center, has already raised a remarkable \$4.5 million dollars through the generous lead support from the Kendeda Fund, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, and local individuals, foundations, and businesses.

The campaign will officially launch on May 1, and a new website will provide information about the campaign, its progress, and the building as it rises.

The groundbreaking will occur May 1, 2015 at 4:30pm. Parking will be provided at the Red Barn at Hampshire College. The press is encouraged to attend and press packets will be available.

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