

LOCAL

Library of Dalai Lamas to come to Ithaca

Simon Wheeler, swheeler@ithacajournal.com | @IJPhotos

Published 4:47 p.m. ET Jul. 6, 2016 | Updated 5:24 p.m. ET Jul. 6, 2016



Nagwang Sonam of Lansing distributes traditional Tibetan scarfs, called khata to the monks chanting for a long life for the Dalai Lama, on his birthday, Wednesday, at Du Khor Choe Ling, the Namgyal Monastery, in the Town of Ithaca. *SIMON WHEELER / Staff Photo*

An educational institution will be built in Ithaca to house the materials of 14 Dalai Lamas, according to an announcement made Wednesday at the Namgyal Monastery in Ithaca during the observance of the Dalai Lama's 81st birthday.

Ven. Tenzin Choesang said the Dalai Lama has accepted the Namgyal Monastery's proposal to create "His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's Library and Museum."

Choesang described the Dalai Lama as delighted to accept the Namgyal Monastery's proposal for the facility. Namgyal is the personal monastery of the 14th Dalai Lama. He last visited Ithaca in October 2007.

In an email, the monastery described the project as one that "will serve to protect the legacy of the Dalai Lama and all he represents to many millions throughout the world."

Wednesday's announcement was attended by Ithaca Mayor Svante Myrick, Town of Ithaca Supervisor Bill Goodman and members of their staffs.

The Namgyal Monastery plans to build a library on the 28-acre site of Du Khor Choe Ling, their facility on state Route 96B in the Town of Ithaca. The new building will be situated between the monastery complex and Route 96B, said Ngawang Dhondup, the administrator of the Namgyal Monastery.

In January, the Ithaca monastery proposed the library, which was supported by the Namgyal Monastery in Dharamsala India, said Dhondup. The monastery is talking to architects to determine what might be needed and what the library might cost, said Dhondup and Choesang.

Choesang, who has been in Ithaca six years, is the president of the board of the [Namgyal Monastery](#) in Ithaca.

There is no timetable for construction. There will have to be fundraising; the progress of that will determine any schedule, said Dhondup. The construction of Du Khor Choe Ling started in 2007 and it did not host its first public event until 2014.

Choesang described the institution to be created in Ithaca, the first of its kind outside Tibet, as a repository of materials from the Dalai Lamas.

The institute's intent is to bring together scientists and practitioners of Buddhist philosophy to explore relationships between Buddhist philosophy and the science of the mind and consciousness, said Choesang.

The Dalai Lama's library and museum will serve as a center for future generations of students, researchers and writers interested in Tibetan Buddhism and its history and philosophy, said Choesang.



The Dalai Lama looks at a model of Du Khor Choe Ling during a visit to Ithaca in October of 2007. Scott Tobey, right, supervised the initial construction of the complex. LANG ELLIOTT / Namgyal Monastery

Dhondup emphasized it is not necessary to be a Buddhist to study at the monastery. He said students should take what is good and share it with their friends and community. "The main thing is to help others."

Dhondup said the Dalai Lama was attracted by the presence of Cornell University and Ithaca College. He emphasized that all people will be able to come and study.

"It is going to be a big project," said Dhondup. He anticipates the new structure will be bigger than the existing building complex at Du Khor Choe Ling.

He said the monastery will work with the Town of Ithaca for approval.

"I don't think you can overstate what this means for the cultural heart of our community," added Mayor Myrick.

He described it as a big opportunity for the city. "We're here to help any way we can," said Myrick.

Dhondup said many people thought a library should be established in a big city like New York or Chicago, or another big area like California. "Those who are interested can come here and study," said Dhondup.

The Namgyal Monastery has sold its former location on North Aurora Street in the City of Ithaca. Starting in August the monastery on Route 96B will be open to the public for meditation from 5:15 to 6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday.