



(Top row, left) Mort and Irma Handel with an architect's rendering of the new Handel Center; (top row, right) shortly after the construction kickoff, the heavy equipment moved onto the site; (bottom row, left) President Harrison, in hard hat, thanked the Handels for their longtime support of the project; (bottom row, right) (l-r) Debra A. Palermino, corporate vice president, MassMutual Financial Group; Linda Kelly, president, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez; U.S. Rep. John B. Larson; Peter Eio, chair, Board of Regents; and Gov. M. Jodi Rell were among the speakers.



## Handels Helped Make It Happen

### UNIVERSITY KICKS OFF PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

With the weathered brick façade of the former Thomas Cadillac distributorship as a backdrop, state and local officials, neighborhood residents, and members of the University community came together on a sunny June morning for a festive construction kickoff and naming ceremony for the University's newest building project, the Performing Arts Center.

At the ceremony, President Walter Harrison announced that the 55,000-square-foot main building of the complex has been named the Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center.

"Mort and Irma Handel have shared our vision for this project from the beginning. Their \$1.5 million commitment—the largest gift from individual donors to the project—is just the latest chapter in their long history of support for the University of Hartford, The Hartt School, and the Hartford arts community," Harrison said. Mort Handel, chairman

of the board of Marvel Entertainment, has been a trustee of The Hartt School and a regent of the University since 1990. Irma Handel is a trustee of the Hartford Art School, Inc.

"This is all about commitment. It's all about something I said five years ago in the Commencement address when I received the honorary doctorate from the University," said Mort Handel. "It's about leaving your mark.... It's about giving back to the community.... [And] the University of Hartford is part of the Hartford community."

The project will transform the former Cadillac distributorship in north Hartford, providing much-needed space for The Hartt School's Theatre and Dance divisions while also serving as an economic catalyst and cultural resource for the Upper Albany and Blue Hills neighborhoods. It is expected to open in the fall of 2008.

Speakers included Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell; U.S. Rep. John B. Larson; Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez; Linda Kelly, president of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; Debra A. Palermino, corporate vice president for MassMutual Financial Group; Mort Handel; Board of Regents Chair Peter Eio; President Harrison; and Hartt School Dean Malcolm Morrison.

Funding for the \$21 million Handel Center has come from federal, state, and city governments; individual donors; and corporations and foundations, including MassMutual Financial Group and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. ■

*To see video clips of remarks made by some of the speakers, please visit [www.hartford.edu/daily](http://www.hartford.edu/daily). Click on the Search button and then enter "June 19, 2007." The article is called "University Kicks Off Performing Arts Center."*