

Sanctuary Redesign Update

Happy 2022 from the Sanctuary Redesign Committee. As everyone looks forward to better days ahead, the committee is planning for a time when the entire BEKI family can gather safely and joyfully in a sanctuary that meets our community's physical, spiritual, and fiscal needs.

The redesign committee began meeting in September and expects to develop a design concept by this spring. Our work is guided by feedback from BEKI members, President Yaron Lew, and Rabbi Eric Woodward. We are also guided by the committee's mission statement: to design a sanctuary that is warm, inclusive, accessible, inspirational, and feasible.

Here is an update on our activities as of December 1 (the deadline for this issue of the BEKI Bulletin).

An **online congregational survey** in November got a great response from 183 people, 95 percent of whom are BEKI members.

The survey results help identify major priorities for the sanctuary redesign. Those priorities include:

- **Accessibility.** Members want to make sure that the bimah and the ark, in particular, are accessible to everyone.
- **Seating.** Respondents want to change the **layout** of our seats. People also want more **comfortable** seats, with more room between rows.
- **Acoustics.**
- **Climate control and air quality.**
- **Amount of natural light.**
- **Intangible priorities** include a **warm atmosphere**; fostering a **sense of community**; creating a space conducive to **participatory prayer and singing**; and facilitating a **spiritual experience**.

These survey findings dovetail with BEKI's values and the redesign committee's mission statement.

Accessibility supports BEKI's egalitarian and inclusive values. The redesign committee will consider accessibility and inclusivity in every aspect of the sanctuary's design and function.

Changing from our current hierarchical, audience-style **seating** arrangement (facing a stage in front) to a more inclusive layout will better fit our participatory, member-led services.

Acoustical improvements will also promote inclusivity, accessibility, and the participatory nature of our services.

For **climate control and air quality**, part of the committee's charge is to determine what HVAC improvements are needed in the sanctuary and to incorporate those changes into the redesign. The upgrades should bring less noise (thereby improving acoustics), better air quality, and improved energy efficiency—potentially reducing BEKI's carbon footprint and operating costs.

And replacing the single-pane sanctuary windows with energy-efficient glass will offer many design possibilities for increasing **natural light** in the room.

To help us turn these priorities into design proposals that fit BEKI's unique character, the redesign committee has retained **architect Michael Goldblum** of [Building Studio Architects](#) in New York City. A Stamford native, Michael has a wealth of experience in synagogue design. He has also worked on numerous Connecticut projects, including the historic preservation of a downtown New Haven bank building.

After our planned congregational meeting in December, the Synagogue Redesign Committee is excited to work with Michael and the congregation to develop design concepts for the seating layout, the bimah, and other major elements of the sanctuary redesign.

Please watch your email and BEKI Happenings for additional updates and opportunities to be involved in the redesign process. At any time, please feel free to contact us with questions or suggestions: sanctuaryredesign@beki.org.

Carole Bass, co-chair

Rick Saltz, co-chair

Eric Dunsker, board liaison and House Committee chair

Lynn Brotman

Jonathan Gordon

Howard Gralla

Marga Hirsch