

A New Haven Tradition since 1892

BEKI bulletin

Congregation
Beth El-Keser Israel

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Message from Rabbi Woodward: Page 14

SANCTUARY REDESIGN

"I love the light colors and the windows."

"Lots of great new ideas."

"It is a beautiful design."

Those were among the reactions of BEKI members to preliminary sketches of the synagogue's proposed sanctuary redesign.

The sketches, released in time for Rabbi Woodward's installation celebration in late March, represent the framework of a conceptual design for a worship space

that reflects BEKI's 21st-century values: warmth, inclusiveness, spiritual intimacy, and true egalitarianism.

Among the major features of the proposed redesign:

- Large new windows on the north (courtyard) wall, bringing in lots of natural light
- A new window above the ark
- A new ark, yet to be designed
- A lower ark platform, with ramps on each side
- Interior walls clad with stone at ground level and bamboo above
- All movable chairs, allowing full accessibility and flexible seating arrangements
- Low bookcases across the back of the room, creating an entry area that is partially separate from the prayer space.

BEKI members provided detailed and valuable feedback to the Sanctuary Redesign Committee. Overall response to the conceptual design was positive. People loved the new windows, the brightness and the accessibility. Many people suggested additions or changes—all of which the committee considered carefully.



The design builds on priorities expressed in a November 2021 congregational survey: accessibility; a new seating layout; improved acoustics; better climate control and air quality; more natural light; and a warm atmosphere that fosters community, participatory prayer and singing, and a spiritual experience.

As you read this, the redesign team is working on multiple fronts:

Architect Michael Goldblum is preparing schematic drawings—more detailed and technical than the sketches.

A newly formed implementation committee is talking with construction firms to get cost estimates.

The redesign committee is working to fill in the blanks in the preliminary sketches, including decorative elements and furniture selection.

Decorative elements and furniture selection will be crucial to how the sanctuary looks and feels, and how it functions as a worship space. The ark design and furniture shown in the sketches are placeholders. The redesign committee will consider numerous options for filling in those blanks, and will keep the congregation informed as we move forward.

By early summer we hope to know how well the estimated project costs align with the budget. If everything goes well, construction could start in late 2022 or early 2023.

We are excited to reach this stage of the redesign project, and even more excited to look forward to BEKI's beautiful future.

For more information, see beki.org/sanctuary-redesign.
Questions or comments? sanctuaryredesign@beki.org