

Ohev Sanctuary Renovation Project Plan

This is a working document to collect the notes from the 12/2 Strategy Discussion and gather the info in one place to start on actions...

Situation:

What are we asking to do? What will actually change?

Why change: safety, security, community, engagement, flexibility. The pews are old and not easy to repair. They are hard to get in and out. Create a fire hazard if walkers are in the aisles. Safety issue if we need to evacuate in an emergency. More access to the Torah when they process through the congregation. Encourage seating up front which makes the room look less empty. Move the pulpit down to the floor for more interaction and engagement. More modern configuration

Why stay the same: cost, time, tradition, change is hard, lack of volunteers to move the project forward, low engagement from the community, lack of interest in a change

What are other synagogues doing? How many still have pews? What denominations are they? Is there a mix of seating? Where do they keep siddurim?

How much will this cost? Estimates from 3 vendors. Ways to get rid of old pews. What are new seating options?

How long will it take? Will it be all at once or in stages?

Besides the reasons for change, do we gain anything else from this? More flexible use of the space, such as dancing for Simchat Torah.

What will we need to do before, during, and after the change? Removal and disposal of old pews, repairs to the floor, new carpets, bring in new seats.

Sanctuary overview and requirements for current layout versus new flexible layout -

Weirdly, our sanctuary already violates the most significant requirement, which is that the sanctuary should face East, towards Jerusalem. Our sanctuary faces due West, which means that the prayer leader is facing East when standing facing the congregation, but the congregation itself is facing the wrong direction completely! No idea who decided that was a brilliant move, but there's not much to be done about it.

As far as the Torah readers' table goes, it is actually traditional for it to be in the CENTER of the congregation, rather than in front – this is attested by both Maimonides and the Chatam Sofer (two critical halachists). So moving the readers' table into the midst of the congregation would be a return to tradition rather than a departure from it!

Music - discuss the backyard sing we had at Slovak/Wimmer house during Covid
Share video of Sukkat shalom Burning Man

Process:

We can follow a similar process as the bylaws change.

Build a proposal that can be shared with the community

Conduct grassroots opinion gathering to get a sense of the community's desires.

- Including: Articles in L'Chaim, call a Congo meeting per bylaws, distribute a written plan, hold town halls, zoom calls, text, email, phone call outreach.

Community engagement is critical to get a broad range of opinions on a change to a critical function of the synagogue

The board will be made and kept aware of the project, but no action needed by the board until the community provides input.

Groups Involved

Ritual Committee, Facilities Committee, Board, entire Ohev community

Who are the individual supporters and detractors?

Chairs

Church chair Google searches bring up lots of options in a variety of prices. Wooden chairs are about \$300 each and metal are around \$50

For an average service and typical setup can we get 50 wooden chairs and the rest in metal or use existing? Reality is we don't have more than 50 unless HH. That puts us at \$15K instead of \$100K

Assumption at Exec was that new chairs need to be wood to be "nice".

Will a chair vendor also do set up and install including removal of pews?

Can we donate old pews and have them hauled away?

Supplier Links

<https://www.woodschurchinteriors.com/church-chairs/>

<https://www.shelbywilliams.com/worship-furniture>

<https://www.newhollandwood.com/synagogue-furniture/>

<https://sauderworship.com/those-we-serve/synagogue/>

Actions:

Jan 6 - RKM - February L'Chaim article and January board discussion for awareness

Jan 6 - RKM/Missy - reach out to other Shuls who did this for info and advice

Jan 6 - Jenny and Missy to look in to possible grant opportunities around security. Ariel is a grant writer and may be willing to help. Window to submit grants opens soon.

Jan 6 - No owner - get a certification from law enforcement or Federation that our existing seating is a safety hazard in case of active shooter.

EXEC - How much are chairs? Who are 3 providers of chairs? Can we crowdsource book holders?

EXEC - music - recap backyard sing at Slovak Wimmer during COVID

EXEC - use existing chairs like we do for High Holidays and Shabbat B'Yachad.

Exec - Michael to discuss with architect friend and see if we can get a diagram and some proposed seatings configs. This will be helpful for future discussions with community.

Board meeting Jan 23

RKM presented. Straw poll was unanimous in favor of proceeding. Biggest concern was cost

Next steps:

Form task force. RKM, Missy, Steve S, Steve R (can lead), Don, Michael Krauss.

Also last night Don and I walked through the Sanctuary. At first glance the project is much larger and more expensive than the chairs.

Don believes the tiles are asbestos tiles with asbestos mastic. That will be expensive to remove. the carpet on the Bimah is also aged and probably needs to be replaced. I am not sure how conservative Don is with his first guess at a cost but he's betting this project will start with a 2

Also items to consider

1. I think a small platform (1 step height) for Torah Reading Table and Pulpit will make sense. that will let everyone regardless of seating see the Rabbi. this platform should be on wheels so it can moved. Would need a new Bimah Table, and Pulpit _ crazy to move up and down on Bimah even if it is "portable" the more moving up and down steps the more likely to break
2. Don mentioned lighting - may need to move . add lights based on where Rabbi will be conducted service for more light
3. Will need to run Electricity for Zoom / microphone / etc.
4. Already discussed - Need to look at Microphone design / acoustics / speakers

Chairs - Found a site this morning - chairs ~ \$200 each I am thinking between 200 and 250

I would set up a horse shoe - two wings ~ 10 rows 10 wide (thats 200) then a third set of rows behind Rabbi Pulpit ~ 10 wide 4 or 5 deep

Charis are cool- They actually make different width chairs - I would consider getting most standard width and then enough for 1 or two rows of wider width chairs for larger people/

Bimah table ~ \$3500

Pulpit - \$1000-\$2000

Temple Sholom got rid of their pews more than 15 years ago. They used Sauder.

Or Ami went with Miller Church Interiors more recently.

Sanctuary Architect used & recommended by Adath Israel:
Sam Olshin FAIA
Atkin Olshin Schade Architects
www.aosarchitects.com

Congregational Zoom Meeting Recap - March 19

20 attendees. RKM presented. Topic generally well received and feeling from the meeting was agreement with concerns about cost, design of chairs, and existing plaques. Specific comments:

Bev Dickson - Participants can be more comfortable and **not feeling like you're on stage sitting on the bimah**

Jacque Tillman - Chairs are more appealing and **will increase participation**

S&A Baron - concerns about **where the existing plaques on the pews will go**. SRR reply these are in the planning and maybe a display of all on a single board

Sherri Zigon - How do we ascend for aliyah if there's no bimah? RKM - **symbolic ascension, but need to address further**

Allison M - Never had pews before in previous shuls and **finds them offputting and rigid**

Helena Landis - Will there be a **ramp for the bimah**? Chairs open up services the community. DA ramp reply is that it will be too long

Louis Stesis - Gave history on the railings on the bimah and asked if we can move them back to being closer together as they were originally intended

Allan Baron - Concerns about acoustics and wiring with the sound project going on. Reply was that we'll work with both projects at the same time as possible/needed

RKM - suggested field trips

***At March board, Don shared a conversation with Fayette group and thinks the project may be in the \$50K range before chair purchases factored in. Also shared very happy with their knowledge, ease to work with, and quality of work.

