

Decision Report Narayever Building Renewal - Adopted By the Narayever Board on December 19, 2019

To: Executive Committee & Board of Governors December 2019

Subject: Sanctuary Design

From: Accessibility & Design Committee & Building Steering Committee

Recommendations:

The Accessibility & Design Committee and the Building Steering Committee both recommends that the Narayever Board of Governors approve the following approach to accessibility and design of the sanctuary in the building renewal project including:

1. The sanctuary be fully accessible to all members in a dignified manner that is consistent with the congregation's egalitarian values.
2. The Bima should be located at the floor level of the sanctuary.
3. A Shulchan (table on which the Torah is read) should be mechanically and easily adjusted for height as desired by individuals praying or speaking from the Bima.
4. A platform provided for those who wish to be elevated that can discreetly be stowed under the Shulchan
5. The Aron Hakodesh (Ark) be lowered to the floor level of the sanctuary.
6. Six Barrier Free Seats be provided in the sanctuary

Background:

The Committee:

The Executive of the Narayever established an Accessibility and Design Committee (ADC) to study, research, work with consultants to make recommendations to the Board about accessibility and design issues. The ADC has met numerous times as a committee, had numerous sub-committee meetings with the Narayever's consultants including architects, engineers, accessibility consultants, and acoustical consultants. Feedback from information meetings and numerous member discussions were used to guide the process. This includes two member information meetings, December 5 and 8, 2019 in which sanctuary design was the main focus. While three shul members who attended the meetings had major concerns about lowering the Bima, by the end of the discussion, they understood and accepted the recommendation.

The ADC includes a group of 10 members who had represented views and expertise in a variety of areas including representing members of various ages, parents of young children, parents of children approaching BBM age, member architects, engineer, lawyers, members

with intimate knowledge of the needs of those with accessibility concerns, the Chair of the Ritual Committee, Rabbi Elkin, Sabrina Friedman, and the chair of the Board's Accessibility, Design and Outreach. (See Appendix 1)

LGA, the building renewal's architects attended all meetings. The ADC also met with our accessibility consultants and received input from our acoustical engineers.

This report makes a recommendation to the Board from the ADC regarding the design of the sanctuary and is supported by both the Accessibility & Design Committee and the Building Renewal Steering Committee.

Arriving at the Recommendation:

At the outset, the ADC established a set of goals to achieve in order to make decisions and recommendations to the Board including:

- Ensuring the sanctuary is fully accessible for people with mobility issues (including people using crutches, canes, walkers, wheelchairs), people with hearing and visibility challenges.
- Maintains the same number of seats as currently exists (222)
- Maintains the look and feel of the existing sanctuary
- Improves the air flow and air conditioning
- Maintains or improves the acoustics

The Committee looked at numerous design options for the location and configuration of the Bima and Aron with the expertise of the committee members and our design consultants.

The Committee investigated numerous options including locating the Bima in the centre of the sanctuary, the side walls, raised and lower Bimas. The Committee found that the goals above often conflicted with one another and that it was impossible to find one perfect solution to the location and configuration of the Bima. The ADC worked with consultants to arrive at a plan that best meets the needs of our community.

Recommended Bima & Ark Design

The recommended layout has the Bima and Ark area at floor level with the same design treatment and lighting that currently surrounds the Bima & Ark. The Committee believes that this recommended design is the most egalitarian, offering the most dignified solution to members' needs. This version includes additional elements to ensure universal accessibility.

Design Elements:

- An expanded reserved seating area close to the Bima that people who have challenges seeing and hearing people on the Bima
- A movable platform that can be used on the Bima for anyone wishing to use it
- An adjustable Shulchan that can be lowered and raised based on the needs of individuals speaking, leyning, davening from the Bima.

Pros:

- Truly accessible for all members in the same dignified manner.
- Maintains all 222 existing seats, including 6 barrier free seats
- Generous space between the Bima and Ark maintaining the feel of a distinct area in front of the Ark.

Cons:

- Some reduced accessibility
- Breaks with tradition of a raised Bima

Notes:

- While the word "Bima" means raised platform and the word "aliya" means to go up, Rabbi Ed assures us that there is "no halachic requirement that the area from which prayers are led and the Torah is read be raised. The "Aliya" can be understood spiritually, not literally."
- Research shows that there is a trend in new shuls to locate Bimas at floor level.
- Continued work with acoustic engineers to ensure sound quality is maintained or improved.

Another option the Committee studied in detail was a design that included a 5" raised Bima. The current Bima is raised 12" above floor level. However, raising the Bima by 5" is the maximum height the architects could use without losing a second whole row of seating that would bring the seat count down by an additional 10 seats.

Pros:

- Maintains the tradition of a raised Bima
- Slightly improves visibility

Cons:

- Raising the Bima by 5" requires a ramp of 5'.
- Space for the ramp comes at a cost of 10 seats reducing the 222 existing seats to 212. Currently during BBM's and at HDD's every seat is used and sometimes still is not enough. The Committee believes this is too great a cost for raising the Bima by only 5"
- The 5' ramp reduces the space between the Bima and the ark, requiring the existing area in front of the ark to be reduced substantially.
- The Committee believes that the ramp will be an obstruction and awkward. The ADC is concerned about the ramp being a tripping hazard.
- The ramp changes the look and feel of the sanctuary.
- The ramp may be disruptive with young children playing on it during services
- Although considered accessible, the Committee believes that going up a 5' ramp for those using canes, walkers, wheelchairs or those who are frail will be a challenge – particularly as the ramp is behind the Bima. Those with the greatest mobility challenges have to walk the furthest to gain access to the Bima.

Note:

- Improving acoustics can be achieved through acoustical design. The Committee continues to work with the acoustical engineers.

Conclusion:

The Accessibility and Design Committee overwhelmingly recommends the design that has the Bima and Ark at the sanctuary floor level.

Appendix One:

Members of the Accessibility & Design Committee

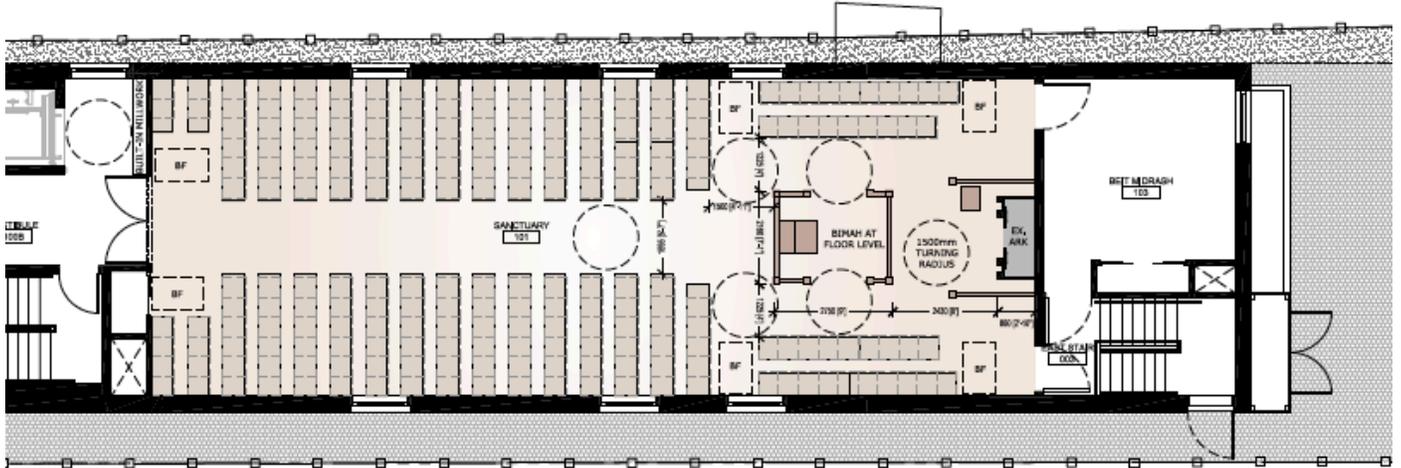
Lorne Cappe, Chair
Lawrence Aronovitch, Chair of Ritual
Ali Engel-Yan
Gary Lichtblau, Member of Building Steering Committee
Jill Magen, Chair Celebrations
Orrin Wolpert
Sarah Lampert
Scott Green
Rabbi Ed Elkin
Sabrina Friedman, Director Youth Programming

Members of the Building Steering Committee

Anna Pace
Phyllis Berck
Lorne Cappe
Mickey Narun
Gary Lictblau

APPENDIX TWO

Recommended Design – Bima at Floor Level
Seat Count: 222



Raised Bima – Bima Raised by 5"
Seat Count 212

