



## **CetraRuddy-designed 52,000 s/f Lincoln Square Synagogue opens; Builder of the \$50 million project was McGowan Builders**

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Architectural firm CetraRuddy designed the new \$50 million, 52,000 s/f Lincoln Sq. Synagogue on Amsterdam Ave. and 69th St.. The synagogue held its first religious service in the new sanctuary and is officially opened as of February. The builder was McGowan Builders, Inc.

The new ground-up structure consists of three above-grade and two below-grade spaces along with extensive outdoor activity areas for educational and holiday uses. The synagogue contains a sanctuary space on the first floor, with pews that seat 442 congregants in the round, and a 160 person Beit Midrash, the House of Study, which serves as the primary place for learning within the synagogue. Additionally, the building contains secondary educational spaces, administrative offices and a 6,500 s/f banquet space to seat 400 people.

Charged with blending synagogue architecture and traditional spirituality with the doctrines of Modern Orthodoxy, CetraRuddy began the project with a deep understanding of its congregation's mission. "The Hebraic consciousness of prayer, reflection, study and education formed the architectural and spatial concepts and the organization within the building," said John Cetra, founding partner of CetraRuddy and design principal of the project. "The idea was to create a 'journey'—a procession from the most public spaces to the more private spaces and the continuity from exterior to interior was a major influence in the design."

The synagogue's Rabbi, Shaul Robinson said, "Lincoln Sq. is a unique place within the Modern Orthodox movement. We have an extremely diverse group of congregants and offer an intimate and inclusive spiritual experience. Because our synagogue is at the center of our congregants' lives, we needed to create a technologically modern building that works within Jewish law and that develops an immediate spiritual bond and sense of community for all who enter."

"It was our goal to design a structure that enhanced the cohesiveness of the congregation and connected congregants to each other. Moreover, the building had to serve all the countless daily activities—everything from prayer, children and adult classes, to numerous joyous events," said Theresa Genovese, associate principal at CetraRuddy and principal in charge of design and construction of the synagogue.

In response to both the spiritual and educational requirements, the CetraRuddy design team was inspired by Jewish symbolic references and inspirational imagery and spent significant time with the congregants to understand their needs. "These influences shaped our thought process on how to create a building which is both spiritual and public," said Cetra. "With the completion of the project, congregants will experience the building each day and know they are in a unique place crafted for them alone and one that reflects the continuum of their heritage."

The design of the facade and sanctuary were inspired by the form and curvilinear nature of the

Torah, in addition to the pattern and movement of the prayer shawls and the elegant dance-like movement of the congregants as they pray. The selection of materials spoke to the history of Judaism— traditional biblical references such as Cedar of Lebanon wood were used along with rusticated granite, fabric-impregnated glass and burnished bronze.

The facade is composed of five ribbons of glass that represent the five books of the Torah. The facade's custom glass walls are interlayered with a glistening bronze tone fabric that begins on the exterior and wraps into the public spaces on the first floor. The sanctuary takes a circular form so that men and women can continue to sit separately yet face the arc and the Torah without visual interference. The sanctuary's ceiling is lit by 613 lights which correspond to the number of commandments in the Torah.

"Guided by the symbolic references to the Torah and the nomadic tabernacle-tent structure, our mission was to convey the heart and spirituality of the congregation, and the warmth that radiates out to the surrounding community," said Cetra.

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