Our master plan design for Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, NY includes a new sanctuary complex, with a new Religious School and Study Center within renovated existing structures on a suburban site. The plan includes extensive re-organization of the site to create a cohesive campus.
The client’s objectives included providing new classroom space for their Religious School program, reorganizing spaces to improve functionality, and improving security, safety and accessibility.
The design for the new sanctuary employs economic building materials and natural light to create a worship space that is both grand and intimate. A visual connection to an exterior garden to the East, behind the Bimah, is a thematic component of the plan. We worked closely with the Temple Clergy to design the sanctuary seating and Bimah to complement their liturgical style and accommodate different services and life cycle events. Landscape and the development of pedestrian connections are used to enhance the spirit of Place and unify the diverse buildings on the campus.
The East Wall is a window to the Spiritual Garden comprised of glass louvers with mirrored undersides. The wall compiles three views: a subtle view directly to the Garden, revealing the world around us; a reflected, idealized view of the Garden reminding us that we are part of a larger world with many views; and a quiet reflection of the Congregation, helping us see the community in which we worship. All of these views collectively hold the Ark: our people, in this place, hold the Ark and the Torahs.
The Sanctuary is comprised of Seven lateral “bands”, acknowledging that every day is for prayer and learning, yet
remembering that the Seventh Day is special, Shabbat. The Seventh "band" is special as well. It is the most nearly complete band, it frames the Bimah, and holds the Ark. When the Sanctuary and Social Hall are combined into one worship space, there are Twelve Bands, to remember the original Twelve Tribes of Israel.
The Ark is a cabinet made of Olive Ash to reference the original Ark carried in the Egyptian desert. The panels are aligned in Sephardic scale, acknowledging that music is part of our worship. A bronze collar lines the Ark opening: it is continuous and mysterious, like Torah, and suggesting study and interpretation. The solar powered Ner Tamid illuminates the top of the bronze collar.

site plan–drawing Courtesy of Rogers Marvel Architects
The people

Architects: Rogers Marvel Architects
Location: Scarsdale, NY, United States
Client: Westchester Reform Temple
Mechanical Engineer: Collado Engineering
Structural Engineer: Robert Silman Associates, P.C.
Civil Engineer: Langan Engineering and Environmental Design
Landscape Designer: Dirtworks, Inc.
Lighting Designer: Jim Conti Lighting Design
LEED Consultant: Buro Happold Consulting Engineers
NYSERDA Representative: SAIC
Energy Modeling Commissioning: EME Group Consulting Engineers
Contractor: E.W. Howell Co., Inc., Kane Contracting
Cedar Supplier: Woodbury Supply Company, Inc.
Project year: 2009
Photographs: Paul Warchol Photography