

Architecture People and Places

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An adaptive reuse project designed by Finegold Alexander + Associates, Inc. has transformed a pair of office buildings in Deerfield, Illinois, into a synagogue for Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim. Photo: Courtesy Finegold Alexander + Associates, Inc.

A \$14 million adaptive reuse project has been completed for Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim in Deerfield, Illinois. Designed by Finegold Alexander + Associates, Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts, the project involved converting a series of single-story 1970s office buildings into a modern religious center to support a growing congregation.

The synagogue complex consists of 71,380 square feet (6,631 square meters) of worship and community space, including a sanctuary, chapel, social hall, youth lounge, and education center with 21 classrooms and five pre-K classrooms. Through a mixture of renovation and reconstruction, Finegold Alexander adapted the existing structures, with features that include a large landscaped courtyard, expanded here as a multipurpose gathering and activity space.

The spaces inside are designed to accommodate a wide range of audience sizes. The sanctuary seats 613 and is shaped to allow for smaller gatherings. The social hall has a capacity of up to 1,200 and is divisible into four rooms for family dinners, meetings, or worship. The chapel seats 100 in a loose configuration, while a contemplation room, an ellipse enclosed by vertical glass channels, sits within a memorial alcove.

The congregation has already moved into the renovated space. Phase two, which includes renovations to a third building, is scheduled to begin in January 2013.