THE HERITAGE VALUE STATEMENT
CONGREGATION SHAAR HASHOMAYIM

CIVIC ADDRESS
450 Kensington Avenue, Westmount

HERITAGE DESIGNATION
Municipal - Category 1: Important – Original 1922 Synagogue (SPAIP)
- Category 2: Interesting – 1948 and 1967 Additions (SPAIP)
Provincial - None
Federal - None

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION
Jewish – Ashkenazi traditional
(Orthodox) rite

OVERVIEW

Historical Value
The historical heritage value resides in the history of the Shaar Hashomayim congregation with Westmount since 1922, when the present synagogue was built. It is the oldest Ashkenazi synagogue in Canada and has, for the last hundred years, had a leadership role nationally and internationally in issues affecting the Jewish community and in larger ones of social justice. The sacrifice of the membership during both World Wars is commemorated in its memorials. The long history of the membership can be traced through the individual memorial plaques. The museum contains a large collection of Judaica and artefacts related to the history of Jewish life in Montreal. The synagogue also has a significant collection of portraits and artwork. The Shaar is famous for the quality of its music, which is an integral part of its religious services. In recent memory, the congregation, its cantor and choir have become associated with Leonard Cohen’s last musical compositions.

Contextual Value
The contextual heritage value resides in the synagogue’s large footprint which, with its associated buildings, occupies almost an entire city block. It is a landmark within a residential community and also forms part of the institutional heart of Westmount. Although its site is now almost entirely built up, the remaining land is densely planted with shrubbery and mature trees.

Architectural and Aesthetic Value
The architectural and aesthetic heritage value resides primarily in the Byzantine Revival of the main sanctuary, designed by John Melville Miller in 1922. The open span space is free of columns which might impede sight lines. The simple material palette of plaster walls, scored to resemble stone, dark stained wood panelling and Judaic references in Hebrew text and form contribute to a majestic neoclassical interior environment. The 1967 additions by Eliasoph & Berkowitz mask the original entrance to the sanctuary. However, the leitmotif of the arcaded forms provides continuity and yet allows for treatments that adapt to the functional program which they screen. The nonfigurative stained glass windows, liturgical fittings and furniture complement the architecture. The complex has a high degree of authenticity and integrity on the exterior and in the sanctuary, chapel and lobby spaces. The other spaces have been modified and renovated over time.

Spiritual and Community Value
The spiritual and community heritage value resides in the soaring volume of the 1922 sanctuary and the quality of light filtering through the multiple stained glass windows with their Judaic references and focus on the platform on which sit the Aron kodesh, the bimah and the chairs for the dignitaries. It is supplemented by the consistency of the nonfigurative ornamentation, the liturgical furnishings and fittings. Of note is the stained glass in the 1967 entrance lobby, with its representation of the burning bush in stained glass. There is spiritual value in the design of the 1967 chapel, with its modernist interpretation of traditional Judaic symbols and its liturgical furnishings and fittings. The complex has been the site of Jewish worship, learning and community since 1922.
SITING

The Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue is located on a site bounded by Kensington Avenue to the east, Cote St. Antoine Road to the north and Metcalfe Avenue to the west, in the centre of Westmount. The religious institution and its associated, interconnected buildings occupy almost the entire block, extending to Sherbrooke Street. The built form occupies almost all of its property and there is little green space. However, there are paved areas that are used for community functions (schoolyard, playground, outdoor courtyard).

Although the synagogue is part of a group of institutional buildings, which includes the civic (Westmount City Hall), the faith-based (St. Matthias), the educational (Selwyn House, Akiva School) and the recreational (Westmount Lawn Bowling), it sits in a residential zone for single- and two-family houses.

DESCRIPTION

[The Shaar Hashomayim — its name in Hebrew means “The Gate of Heaven” — is known familiarly as “The Shaar”, and this shortened appellation will be used interchangeably with the full name throughout this document.]

The Shaar was constructed in 1922, and expanded in 1967. It is the largest synagogue in Montreal, and the first congregation in Canada to follow the Ashkenazi rite. According to the information sheet produced by the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec [CPRQ, 2003], it is the second most important congregation in Canada, after the Beth Tzedek, in Toronto. (However, how “importance” is defined by the CPRQ is unclear.) For over a hundred years, the Shaar has been a leading voice for Canadian Jewry, both within the country and abroad and this, without increasing its size through mergers.

A synagogue has traditionally been more than a place of worship. It is a community building which fulfills three functions under one roof: a house of prayer, a house of learning and a house for gatherings. In fact, the word synagogue derives from the Greek (synagein, “to bring together”) and means “a place of assembly”. The property contains the sanctuary, a chapel, offices, meeting rooms, several reception halls, kosher kitchens, a museum, a pre-school, a primary Hebrew school, a library and a gymnasium. There is also an underground parking garage.

The complex is a collection of interconnected buildings, and the whole cannot be easily summarized. In consequence, the description focuses on the parts. The original synagogue is a reinforced concrete structure, clad with brown brick. The ornamentation is in finely cast concrete. Its architectural style is based on two streams: the Byzantine Revival, and the neoclassical.

RELEVANT DATES

1921-1922
Construction of the synagogue, chapel and community rooms. Architect: John Melville Miller

1948
Construction of the Rabbi Herman Abramowitz Building, towards the south west of the site. Architect: Maxwell M. Kalman

1966-1967
Additions to the original synagogue, including a new entrance hall, chapel, community rooms, library, museum, boutique (now closed), kosher kitchens, etc. Architect: Saul M. Berkowitz, of Eliasoph & Berkowitz

1967
Installation of stained glass windows by Theo Lubbers and Pierre Osteroth

2003-2007
Renovations

2006
Construction of a below-grade gymnasium, by Architem, architects
The same design sobriety is visible in the Rabbi Herman Abramowitz Building, erected in 1948 to house the Hebrew school. The 1967 extensions are clad in granulated precast concrete panels, whose arcaded forms recall the traditional architecture found in Israel. While the majority of the 1967 work added distinct volumes to the site, the new entrance on Cote St. Antoine Road masks the original façade of the synagogue, which can only now be partially viewed from inside the building.

**FAITH AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

Judaism is the oldest of the three established monotheistic religions. (The others are Christianity and Islam.) In North America, there are four widely acknowledged movements in modern Judaism: the Orthodox, the Conservative, the Reform and the Reconstructionist. All Jews believe in a single God, incorporeal and eternal, who guides all people to act in a just and merciful way. Worship is focused on daily prayer and observance of holidays. The laws and tenets are contained in the Five Books of Moses (known in the Christian tradition as the Old Testament), hand-written in Hebrew in scrolls, known as torahs. The torahs are considered both sacred and functional objects. The code of ethics is also further defined by reference to the sayings of the Prophets and rabbinical writings.

The religious tradition of the Shaar Hashomayim congregation follows Modern Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law, and the Ashkenazi Orthodox tradition of liturgy. In Orthodox congregations, the language of prayer is Hebrew. The services are led by the rabbi and the prayers are chanted by the cantor, sometimes with support from a male choir. Traditionally, Orthodox congregations live in expectation of the coming of a Messianic Age in which universal peace will be established. Jews do not subscribe to any missionary work, outside of their own community.

The concept of a synagogue evolved relatively late in Jewish history; it began in response to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E. and the consequent Jewish diaspora. The decentralized system of worship led to the creation of community synagogues.

The historic evolution of one Holy Temple to various decentralized sacred spaces finds expression in classic synagogue architecture. The presence of a centrally placed sacred space – the Holy Ark – replaces the ark of the Temple; other components, such as candelabras and even the structure and language of prayers seek to emulate portions of the Temple service. In Orthodox synagogues, the ritual separation of men and women during worship finds its origin in Temple practices as well.

A synagogue has two elements which relate to each other and which are fundamental to the rituals of worship. These are the “Aron kodesh” or ark, which contains the torah scrolls and the “bimah” or reading table. Three times each week, during daily services, a torah is taken out of the Aron kodesh and unrolled on the bimah, so that portions can be read aloud. Traditionally, the Aron kodesh was placed on the east wall of the sanctuary, and the bimah was located in the middle of the sanctuary. Part of the ceremony therefore included the processional between these two objects. After the 19th c. Reform movements in Germany, a new layout was implemented, in which the bimah and the Aron kodesh were placed on the same platform. (Although it is generally associated with Reform synagogues, this design is found in the Shaar.)
The synagogue is the spiritual centre of the Jewish community. Newborn rituals, coming-of-age celebrations, marriages, funerals, and even moments highlighting personal or professional achievements revolve around the synagogue community and its clergy.

GOVERNANCE
Every synagogue is autonomous. Its construction, operations and maintenance, as well as the appointment of its rabbi and other religious officials are determined by the president and board of directors, who are elected annually from the membership.
HISTORICAL VALUE (1/2)

DESCRIPTION

The Oldest Ashkenazi Congregation in Canada
During the French regime, Jews were prohibited from living in Quebec. This situation changed once the British government took control. Several Jewish merchants arrived with Wolfe and remained. Although they settled first in Quebec City and in Trois Rivières, the first synagogue in Quebec was established in 1768, on Chenneville Street in Montreal. It was named the Shearith Israel. However, it remains better known as the ‘Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue’. After the passing of the 1832 Act Conferring Rights of Citizenship Upon Individuals Professing the Jewish Religion, the population began to increase in more significant numbers.

In 1846, the Corporation of English, German and Polish Jews was founded. This group, once formed, seems to have been moribund until 1858, when the corporation was once again active. In May, 1859 their first synagogue, designed by the architect John James Browne, opened on St. Constant Street in Montreal. It was this congregation which came to be known as the Shaar Hashomayim – the Gate of Heaven.

The rites practiced in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue are generally agreed to have been Sephardic, reflecting the origins of the first English Jews to settle in Quebec. (English Jews were descended from the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had fled the religious persecution of the late 15th century Spanish and then Portuguese monarchies.) Those practiced by the English, German and Polish Jews were Ashkenazic in origin. Ashkenazi Jews originated in France and Germany during the Middle Ages. Thence, they settled across Europe, into the far reaches of Poland, Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine. Their common daily language was Yiddish, a dialect not shared by the Sephardi.

In 1886, in time for the High Holidays, the second synagogue for the Corporation of English, German and Polish Jews opened its doors on McGill College Avenue in Montreal. It was a large structure, built in a primarily Moorish Revival style. Like the St. Constant Street synagogue, the men and women sat separately: the men on the ground floor and the women in the balcony. Between 1903 and 1909, there was a dramatic increase in Jewish immigration to Canada. This was spurred no doubt by the increasing anti-Semitism in Europe, marked by the Dreyfus Scandal in France and the state-sanctioned pogroms in eastern Europe. Montreal was receiving favourable press as a place whose courts rebuked overt anti-Semitism and where the Jewish community had established various institutions to help its newcomer.

By 1909, the Shaar Hashomayim needed to expand. The boundaries of the search area at first only extended as far west as Guy Street. By 1912, this had been enlarged to include Greene Avenue. The quest was suspended by the outbreak of the First World War. After the war, the synagogue acquired land on Kensington Avenue in Westmount. John Melville Miller was selected as the architect. Yet again scheduled to coincide with the Jewish High Holidays, the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue opened on Sept. 17, 1922. In 1948 the Rabbi Herman Abramowitz Building, housing a Hebrew school, was built on a portion of the site.
HISTORICAL VALUE

At the beginning of the 1960s, land assembly began on the rest of the block, to provide room for expansion. In 1967, the Board of the synagogue undertook an extensive enlargement campaign. A new entrance hall was built along Cote St. Antoine Road, providing a crush space in front of the sanctuary. Facilities for coats and washrooms, an enlarged chapel and more banquet halls, kosher kitchens, a museum, a boutique, a library, an indoor garage and an exterior courtyard were all built. Eliasoph & Berkowitz were the architects.

The Abramowitz Building today houses the Akiva School. A gymnasium was recently built below grade to serve both the school children and the synagogue congregation.

A Leading Voice in the Canadian Jewish Community
For over a hundred years, the clergy and congregants of the synagogue have been at the forefront of issues affecting the Jewish community in Canada and abroad. The rabbis have assumed leadership roles in promoting Zionism, in caring for the less fortunate and in speaking out against injustice, both against Jews and other communities. The war memorial plaques commemorate the service and sacrifice of Shaar members in both world wars. There is outreach to the other religious communities and ceremonies are shared in public venues with the nearby Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom.

The Music of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim
Congregation Shaar Hashomayim is home to one of the last vestiges of the European Choral Synagogue tradition. Music has always played a key role in the life and identity of the congregation. Indeed, one of the major reasons for establishing Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in 1846 was the yearning of its founding members for an Ashkenazic service that included the melodies with which they were familiar. The congregation established an all-male a cappella choir in 1887. Today, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim is one of only a few synagogues whose services are led every week by a cantor with a supporting male choir. It is now associated with the final songs of Leonard Cohen, who is buried in the Shaar Hashomayim Cemetery.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- The continuous use of the site by the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim since 1922.
- The siting of the building, with its main entrance on Cote St. Antoine Road, a route in continuous use since Indigenous settlement in the region.
- The construction of the synagogue, in the heart of Westmount, as a tangible demonstration of the importance and financial stability of the Ashkenazi Jews in Montreal.
- The Shaar Hashomayim congregation, a leader in the Canadian Jewish community.
- War memorial plaques.
- Museum: ceremonial objects that reflect the rituals of Jewish life and the Jewish holiday cycle. Also on display are archival photos and objects representing the history of the Shaar from its inception in 1846 on St. Constant Street.
CONTEXTUAL VALUE

DESCRIPTION

A Synagogue at the Heart of an Institutional Sector
The Shaar is one of several institutional buildings built within a short distance of each other. These include: Westmount City Hall (its close contemporary in age), St. Matthias Church, the Westmount Lawn Bowling Club and Selwyn House School. In keeping with the fundamental nature of a synagogue, the complex itself houses spaces for religious, social and learning activities.

A Landmark in the Neighbourhood
The complex, extending over almost a complete city block, is a landmark in the area, largely because of its size, rather than because of its height. It is surrounded by two- and three-storey houses and a number of low-scale apartment buildings. The complex has multiple entrances, on Kensington, Cote St. Antoine and Metcalfe, making the building quite porous and open to the neighbourhood.

Green Spaces and Dedicated Uses
The synagogue buildings are generally set back from the surrounding streets, and these bands are green, planted with flowers, shrubbery and mature, largely deciduous trees. There are other hard-surface spaces, maintained for specific users and purposes. The ceremonial entrance to the synagogue faces Cote St. Antoine Road, and is reached from a broad plaza, which is used as a spill-out space after services. The Akiva School has both a playground with equipment and a school yard. There is also an exterior courtyard, surrounded on three sides by built form and along the street, by an open arcade. This courtyard is often used for community functions, including as a sukkot, in the autumn.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- Siting in the heart of Westmount, forming part of an institutional core.
- A landmark within a residential sector and a strong presence on Cote St. Antoine Road.
- The mature, lush vegetation planted within the setbacks and on the street façades.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE

DESCRIPTION

A Complex Designed by Several Architects
The original synagogue was designed by John Melville Miller (1875-1948). At a time when Jewish architects were scarce, the congregation turned to a respected architect who was known to the community for two nearby buildings. Miller was the architect for the 1911 Temple Emanu-El, built east of the site of The Shaar, on Sherbrooke Street. This Byzantine Revival synagogue was greeted with critical acclaim and is thought to have inspired Miller’s stylistic choice for the 1913 Stanley Presbyterian Church (now the Seventh Day Adventist Church) on Westmount Avenue, which he designed as a partner in Hutchison Wood & Miller. The following biography is extracted and condensed from his entry in the the Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Architects, 1800-1950.

"MILLER, John Melville (1875-1948), active in Montreal, Que. where he was in partnership with Alexander C. Hutchison and George W. Wood from 1908 to 1918...He later worked under his own name, maintaining a successful practice for over twenty years. Born in Montreal on 15 June 1875, he was educated at the Montreal High School, and served his architectural apprenticeship under Alex F. Dunlop from 1890 to 1895. In 1899 he moved to Boston to study architecture, and remained there until late 1900. After his return to Montreal he joined the firm of Hutchison & Wood and was later invited to become a full partner in 1908. Their firm became one of the largest and most successful architectural offices in that city before WWI, and they obtained nearly fifty significant commissions for commercial, industrial, institutional and residential work in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto.

When Hutchison retired in 1918, Miller decided to open his own office, making a slow transition from the Beaux-Arts style which he employed in his work with the partnership, to a stripped-down modernist style best seen in his design for the Gate House Building, Montreal (1930; demol. 1960), and in his design for the sprawling 6 storey Montcalm Market Place in Quebec City (c. 1930, but not built). Miller was also active as a watercolour artist who studied painting under Maurice Cullen, R.C.A., and he regularly exhibited his architectural drawings and his art work at the annual exhibitions of the Royal Canadian Academy... He was elected as an Associate of the R.C.A. in 1911, and as a full member in 1927...Miller died in Montreal on 17 September 1948...."

After the completion of the Shaar Hashomayim, Miller continued to work for the Jewish community, designing the 1928 Montreal Hebrew Old People’s & Sheltering Home on Esplanade Avenue near Marie-Anne Street, and the 1929 Chevra Kadisha Synagogue on Fairmount Avenue at Hutchison Street, in Montreal.

At its opening, the synagogue was the largest in Canada, and its influence was far-reaching. In Montreal, the Shaare Zion Synagogue copied its interior and the 1930 Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue in Windsor is cited as a small-scale replica of the Shaar.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (2/6)

In 1947, Maxwell M. Kalman was selected to design the Rabbi Herman Abramowitz Building, which would house a Jewish day school to provide expanded facilities and relieve the crowding within the synagogue. Kalman was part of the first generation of locally trained Jewish architects. The following text has been extrapolated and condensed from Wikipedia. His entry in the Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Architects, 1800-1950 has not yet been written, although there is a listing of his projects:

“Maxwell Myron Kalman was born in Montreal in 1906. He graduated from the McGill University School of Architecture during the Great Depression and the economic situation was so dire that he was forced to open his own office, to generate work for himself. His reputation for economical designs catapulted him from modest renovations into the developer’s world of commercial and residential projects. In 1949, he gained a higher profile as the architect for the Norgate Shopping Centre, Montreal the first in Canada. Kalman also served the Jewish community, designing the art deco-inspired Workmen’s Circle Centre (today the Sala Rossa) and the Jewish People’s School (today the College Français). He died in 2009.”

The third architect to contribute in a significant way to the synagogue was Saul Milton Berkowitz (1918-date of death unknown), who was responsible for the extensive renovations and additions of 1966-67. Born in New York State, he relocated to Montreal to attend McGill University. Berkowitz’s biography has not yet been written and interested readers are referred to the article on him in Continuité, in which he reveals that the Shaar Hashomayim remains the favourite project of his long career. Berkowitz had a long professional association designing for the Jewish community including: the Shaar Zion Synagogue (whose interior is a scaled-down version of Miller’s design for The Shaar) and the Adath Israel Synagogue. In 1948, after Berkowitz began a partnership with Milton Eliasoph (1908- c. 1994), the firm designed the Pollack Department Store in Quebec City, the Young Israel Synagogue in Montreal, the Beth Israel Synagogue in Quebec City, the major extension to the Shaar Hashomayim and the last expansion of the Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom.

Note: The many component parts of the Shaar complex are revealed at a glance. Consequently, the discussion that follows emphasizes the individual components rather than the complex as a whole.

The Original Synagogue (1920-1921)
Until modern times, synagogue architects were faced with a dilemma. In an age of revivals and associative architecture, which style was appropriate for the representation of a Jewish building? Gothic Revival and neoclassical styles were seen as inherently Christian. The first Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue had been Greek Revival; the second, Egyptian Revival. The first English, German and Polish Synagogue had also been Greek Revival; the second of Moorish influence. Miller chose a style for the exterior which was associated with Turkish (and early Christian) architecture – Byzantine Revival. He had already used it successfully for the Temple Emanu-El and it was exotic enough to evoke Middle Eastern associations.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (3/6)

He borrowed forms, such as the copper domes rising from flat roofs, which were explicitly Middle Eastern, combining them with details that he had developed for the nearby Presbyterian church. (The triad of arched entrance doors are very similar to those found on the main façade of the church.) In fact, the church and the synagogue share similar formal compositions. The synagogue has more volumes expressed, leading to the central dome and to the shallow gable of the sanctuary beyond. It has also explicitly themed sculptural work, including the lion of Judah and the tablets representing the Ten Commandments.

The front doors originally led to a small entrance hall and then directly into the main sanctuary, the heart of the synagogue. This vast room does not reference Middle Eastern architecture. It resembles a colonnaded nave, without the columns. The entire space is open span, providing all worshippers with an unobstructed view of the raised platform on which stands the Aron kodesh and the bimah.

The design inspiration is neoclassical, mixed with arcading above the elaborately carved ark. The symbolic importance of the space is underlined by the extensive use of dark wood panelling, which provides the backdrop for the chairs of the clergy and dignitaries.

Because Orthodox Judaism does not permit representational art depicting humans, and some congregations extend the proscription to all animals as well, the interior decor is austere, relying on scriptures in Hebrew and the Star of David, and neo-classical forms, such as the swags. The six pointed star is omnipresent, forming the design motif for the stained glass windows, the light fixtures, and the inlaid woodwork.

The men sit in the centre of the synagogue, on either side of a central aisle. The women sit on raised platforms, on either side of the men’s section. Although this arrangement may seem unusual, it is customary in Orthodox synagogues, and the concept for the separation was unusually liberal, since the women are separated, but not screened or removed to another floor.

Natural light floods in from the clerestory windows above the two enormous beams which provide the clear span, and is filtered through the yellow stained glass of the tall windows on either side of the sanctuary. Three windows, containing Star of David motifs complete the composition above the ark. They are contained within a colonnaded arcade, which provides room for the choir.

The ceiling of this soaring space is flat, defined by caissons of plaster. The hanging light fixtures, including the eternal light over the ark, are all original.

The Rabbi Herman Abramowitz Building (1948)
In 1947, the Synagogue Board hired M.M. Kalman to design a new school building, on a vacant part of the property. It was done economically, but with a similar material palette and certain stylistic references that recall the main synagogue.
The Additions to the Synagogue (1966-1967)
In 1966, Saul M. Berkowitz of Eliasoph & Berkowitz was hired to carry out extensive renovations and additions. The impact on the sanctuary was limited to its enlargement towards the north, swallowing up the original entrance hall and the creation of a balcony. These two gestures added about 500 seats to the original 1500. Berkowitz’s major impact was in the masking of the original façade with a new volume, containing a cramped spill-out space, which connects to the new entrance hall and entry doors. Berkowitz also enlarged the synagogue footprint, creating a new chapel to replace the one which had been entered from Kensington Avenue. The new spaces included a museum, boutique, meeting rooms, a 600-person multipurpose hall, kosher kitchens and service spaces. On the exterior, Berkowitz used a simple elongated arcing of precast concrete to unify his interventions. This wall treatment, in an almost-white colour, was designed to evoke the sun-bleached stone and the architectural forms of Israel. Stained glass windows, representing the Burning Bush, the giving of the Ten Commandments and the Gate of Heaven, ornament the entrance sequence.

In the new chapel, Berkowitz evoked the same themes that Miller had used: the Star of David forms the abstract design of the ceiling; the arcade is used for the windows; wood panelling provides warmth. In the synagogue minutes of 6 March 1967, the architect gave a description of the chapel which is still true today:
“It will seat approximately 280 people and cover an area, 50 feet by 70 feet. The windows will be fitted with solar bronze glass, the left wall will be paneled and there will be space for three bookcases. In front of the Ark there will be two slabs of rough stone representing tablets of the Law to be engraved. The curtains of the Ark will be woven in colours of purple and red. A motorized drape will reduce the size of the chapel by approximately two-thirds for week-day services embracing three rows of the second seating section, the latter being reserved for ladies.”

In fact, the Synagogue Board decided that it would be too confusing to have different seating patterns in the main sanctuary and the chapel, and instructed the architect to divide the seating down the middle. A row of potted plants provides the required separation. For similar reasons of consistency, the bimah was placed on a raised platform, with the Aron kodesh, instead of implementing a central bimah.

In Montreal, where the street grid is laid out at 45 degrees to the cardinal compass points, it is tricky to establish the Aron kodesh on the east wall, as it should be. However, again for consistency, the placement is identical in both spaces of worship.

Berkowitz chose a precast arcaded panel as his design element for the new facades, and used it throughout the work, so that there is a consistency and unified theme to the additions.

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1 Wilfrid Shuchat, Gate of Heaven, McGill University Press, 2000
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (5/6)

He varied the heights of the panels, so that sometimes, as in the chapel, the windows are two storeys in height, with a discreet spandrel panel in bronze aluminium; elsewhere the panels are a single storey, combined with stained glass. In front of the original building, the panels include brickwork, referencing the brick walls behind. In the courtyard, the panels are open, with metal grilles providing physical separation from the street. The almost-white colour of the aggregate reinforces the connection with the arcaded architectural forms of Israel.

Architectural Integrity
In the original sanctuary, there is a high level of authenticity and integrity, except for the modifications to extend the seating and add the balcony.

Elsewhere in the complex, some of the 1960s work, such as the main lobby and the chapel, remains intact. The recent refurbishment of the basement level has removed all of the 1960s work. Although the exterior of the original synagogue is no longer completely visible, its architecture is still discernable and the 1960s work, which hides it, is theoretically reversible.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

Exterior features
- Original Synagogue:
  The overall volume, including the rectangular footprint, which reflects the flat apse, central nave and raised side seating. The main volume is composed of several smaller rectangular volumes which build towards and surround the highest volume of the main sanctuary. Although the original volume is partially obscured by the later additions, it is still discernable.
  The central copper dome and secondary domes.
  The material palette of brown brick walls and ornamental carvings in cast concrete; wood frames, doors and windows.
  The stained glass windows with Star-of-David motifs.
  The main façade, including carvings evocative of the Jewish religion (the Tablets of the Law; and the oculi with the Star of David).
- Rabbi Herman Abramowitz Building:
  The elements that relate the building to the synagogue, including the front porch and door surround; decorative columns, the projecting cornice; general material palette.
- 1966-67 Expansion:
  The precast arcaded panels that form the curtain walls of the extension, which combine to form a consistent screen, but which have subtle variations depending on their purpose and their location.
  The stained glass windows.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (6/6)

Interior decoration / integrated art

- The wall panelling.
- Two balustrades separating the nave from the side aisles.
- The original hanging light fixtures.
- The Hebrew inscriptions.
- The repetitive stained glass windows in the main sanctuary.
- The use of the Star of David as a decorative element.
- The plasterwork.
- The stained glass windows on the main entrance of the extension of 1967, designed by Lilian Hoffman and executed by Pierre Osterroth, and the two stained-glass windows by Théo Lubbers.
- The wall panelling in the chapel and the Aron kodesh in the chapel.
SPIRITUAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE

DESCRIPTION

A Dynamic Religious Complex
Consistent with its three mandates (prayer, learning and community), the synagogue hosts religious life-cycle events (circumcision & baby naming ceremonies; Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, marriages, burial services, “Kaddish” or mourning services); religious services on a daily basis and for religious holidays, a conversion program and Torah study.

As well, there are numerous community projects, which include Meals-on-Wheels, Programs for seniors, “Tzadakah” charity programs, visiting the sick, Sisterhood and Men’s Association auxiliary organizations, volunteer recruitment and training. Finally, there are educational programs, lecture series, concerts and community-wide holiday celebrations in collaboration with the Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom and the City of Westmount.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

Liturgical furniture in the Main Sanctuary
- The Aron kodesh, the bimah, the two menorahs, the eternal lamp, the officiant chairs, the suspended lamps.
- The Aron kodesh in the Chapel.

Symbolic forms
- The repetitive use of the Star of David motif throughout the sanctuary and in the stained glass windows.
- The upper walls of the sanctuary are adorned with various verses, mostly establishing the importance of sacred spaces. The front walls – on the right and left sides – feature a pair of verse elaborating on the same theme: “love.” One reads, “Love your Neighbor as Yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), while the other reads, “Love the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- The middle front wall features a traditional saying written in many historical synagogue buildings: “Know Before Whom you Stand.”

Symbolic layouts or components
- The grouping of the Aron kodesh with the bimah on a raised platform is characteristic of synagogue design after the 19th-century reform movements in Germany.
- The separation of the men’s and women’s seating, in a manner that favours neither gender and isolates no one.
- The 1967 stained glass windows, with the themes of the Burning Bush, the giving of the Ten Commandments and the Gate of Heaven.
PROCESS

This Value Statement is based on a visit made in the autumn of 2016, analysis and a group discussion held on June 19, 2018.

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DISCUSSION GROUP

Claire Berger, President of the Congregation, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim
Peter Jacobs, Chair of the Architecture Committee, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim
Penni Kolb, Executive Director, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim
Julia Gersovitz O.C., Chair, Westmount Local Heritage Council (LHC)
Cynthia Lulham, City Councillor, City of Westmount
Clarence Epstein, Heritage Specialist
Caroline Breslaw, Board Member, Westmount Historical Association and LHC
Nathalie Jodoin, Assistant Director, Urban Planning Department, City of Westmount
Myriam St-Denis, Secretary, Westmount Local Heritage Council

WRITING AND EDITING

Julia Gersovitz O.C., Chair, Westmount Local Heritage Council
Myriam St-Denis, Secretary, Westmount Local Heritage Council
Nathalie Jodoin, Assistant Director, Urban Planning Department, City of Westmount