

Recommendation to the Board
from the Jewish Identity and Spirituality Working Group

Members: John Walthour and Tamar Ghidalia (co-chairs), Sara Greenhalgh, Julie Jacobs, Aaron Lichtov, Rachel Lipkin, Jane Newman, Lyonel Norris, Stacy Rudoy, Caroline Schultz, and Jessica Wicks, with staff support from Rabbi Latz and Rabbi Lekach-Rosenberg.

The Jewish Identity and Spirituality group met over the course of several months and, in late Spring 2019, submitted the following summary of its work to the Board. This document was received by the Board and has become part of the work in exploring co-location.

Findings and Insights

1. In our working group, we have people for whom location and buildings matter deeply and they treasure many memories and life cycle moments in our current location; other people for whom Shir Tikvah is home wherever Shir Tikvah is—buildings and facilities don't matter much. We imagine this diversity is reflected in the broad congregation.
2. We have some questions about issues that arise about Jewish identity and spiritual practice and how to discern what are about Shir Tikvah, no matter the location, and what are specific to and need to be addressed with co-location.
3. We've noted that for many who enter Shir Tikvah, we can feel "comfortable" in our Judaism. Some folks feel there will need to be an assertiveness should we co-locate; it will be more "work" than it is today and that we can't be passive. This is felt more strongly by those who are sometimes marginalized in a fully Jewish environment such as Jews of color and Jews by choice.
4. There are multiple dimensions to Judaism and Shir Tikvah members sometimes want to be comfortable being "Just Jewish" and at other times actively engaged and challenged through "Jewish Justice". Co-location promises more opportunities for social justice but will it still be an environment where people can be comfortably, authentically, Jewish?

5. The kitchen—and kashrut—is something of concern to the committee. We learned that it is a current question in our Minnehaha location. With a shared kitchen, it is also an issue. Rabbi Lekach-Rosenberg and a sub-committee are going to address this issue moving forward.
6. Co-location challenges to Jewish Identity and Spirituality are not just about the “Building” or co-locating per se. Our Communications and Programming will have as much or more of an impact to reinforce or dilute our Jewish Identity and Shir Tikvah “brand.”
7. We believe the issues we’ve raised and recommendations are addressable. There is important work to be done but we do not believe these are barriers to co-location.

Recommendations

1. Jewish Sanctuary, Space and Symbolism:
 - We recommend we take steps to ensure the 3400 Dupont location will feel authentically, unambiguously Jewish when members of Shir Tikvah enter from the outside.
 - We recommend the presence of Jewish symbols and ritual items in our sanctuary (such as a beautiful ark, sifrei Torah, and ner tamid)
 - We recommend we elevate *Hiddur Mitzvah* as a Jewish value with beautiful Jewish art in the design of the new sanctuary space (e.g. 18 foot ceilings; window blinds that have Biblical scenes or values artistically designed on them, etc.) and, to the extent possible, in the classrooms. This art and design should reflect the spirit of Shir Tikvah, our values, our commitment to racial justice, and the racial and cultural diversity of our membership and the Jewish people.
 - It is important that we honor and bring some of the history with us to the new place as we celebrate the new: We recommend transferring existing touchstones (e.g. consecration and confirmation photos) and creating new art

and new touchstones. Explore commissioning new artwork to commemorate the move and have youth create art for their new classrooms.

- We recommend a Jewish library/media center be included and would like to explore if the library can be sanctuary-adjacent.
- We recommend we hang *mezzuzot* on doors to the sanctuary and any other dedicated spaces e.g. offices. We have questions on whether or not we can hang *mezzuzot* on other doors including the exterior entrance to the building and the classrooms.
- We recommend outside “Shir Tikvah” signage on the exterior of the building with two purposes in mind: (1) to make Jewish members feel comfortable that they are walking into a Jewish space literally as they are entering through the door and (2) to communicate to the broader community that our building houses a Jewish congregation.
- We recommend exploring the creation of a *mikveh* in the new space.
- We recommend a sanctuary that is accessible, with visible site lines to the rabbis and music leaders, and flexible and movable components.

2. Communications and Programming:

- We recommend that our communications, “branding”, and programs purposefully reinforce ST’s identity.
- We recommend that we should be more cautious—in particular in the first year—about communicating as much about the commonalities in mission with First U. While embracing each other, we also need to counter the very real and understandable perception that co-location is a merger of two congregations. As a member of First U said at co-location retreat, “No one wants to be in a relationship

where you're always talking about the relationship. It's exhausting."

3. Radical Hospitality and Strengthening Jewish Identity for All
 - No Jew should feel out of place at Shir Tikvah.
 - The voices of those marginalized in a fully Jewish environment, such as Jews of color and Jews by choice, should be central to deciding how to make the new location as radically hospitable as possible.