

# Congregation Beth Israel

## Strategic Plan 2017-2020



The Star of David or Magen David is a symbol most commonly associated with Judaism today. Jewish scholars have attributed deep theological significance to this symbol. Some note that the intertwining triangles give strength to the star making the triangles inseparable, like the strength and resilience of the Jewish people. Individually each point is only that – a single point representing one aspect of Congregation Beth Israel community. Together the points form a beautiful star, a meaningful symbol as a beacon of hope for what our synagogue's future can be. The points of this Star of David are analogous to the pillars or priorities on which our community must build upon in the coming years. Surrounding the Magen David is an overarching area of emphasis that should be woven throughout each strategic priority and enable us to plan so that we, as a community, can ensure sustainability for the synagogue's future.

By all measures, Congregation Beth Israel is a successful congregation with a full time Rabbi, Cantorial Soloist, Keshet Director, Administrative Assistant, Keshet teachers, madrichim, Board of Directors and a large cadre of volunteers. At a time when synagogues around the country are in decline, Congregation Beth Israel continues to grow... with a newly constructed synagogue building, and growing membership. The Keshet Religious School's expansion, adult education programs and a variety of Shabbat and holiday services and events are examples of some successful programs and events. There is so much more we can and should be doing.

**Why create a strategic plan?** In the early 1990's, Congregation Beth Israel's dream was to envision ourselves in a new synagogue building designed to meet the changing needs of our membership. In anticipation of moving into our new synagogue, Congregation Beth Israel's Board of Directors endorsed the development of a strategic plan which could act as a blue print for the future, helping to guide the mission, vision, and activities of Congregation Beth Israel in coming years.

**We asked and you told us.** Congregation Beth Israel is made up of many smaller communities with diverse backgrounds and perspectives seeking to connect to Jewish life. The need to reach our members where they are, and when and how they are ready to engage has never been more critical. The intent of the strategic plan is to reach across members, board, committees, clergy and staff. The strategic plan will respond to the input the congregation shared; address perceived gaps in day-to-day operations; develop programs/projects/offerings that will engage our community together; and reach beyond our immediate community border to impact the world around us.

### MISSION

**Congregation Beth Israel is a diverse and inclusive synagogue affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism and committed to a tradition that honors both Jewish continuity and innovation. We warmly welcome people into our vibrant community, dedicated to the study of Torah and creative Jewish learning, joyous and meaningful worship, and engaging in the sacred obligation of tikkun olam, repair of the world. As inheritors of a rich past and creators of a future full of possibility, we continually seek new opportunities to support each other in participating and growing Jewishly.**

### 3 OVERARCHING STRATEGY, VISION & VALUES

A cross-section of Congregation Beth Israel leaders and members gave input in creating the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. They helped create the plan's broad strategy, vision and values listed below:

#### VISION

The vision of Congregation Beth Israel is to be a spiritual, cultural and intellectual center for Jewish activity and values in Northwest Washington.

#### VALUES

Gmilut Hasadim...  
*acts of kindness*

Kehillah...  
*community*

Klal Yisrael...  
*Jewish community in Israel*

Tikkun Olam...  
*repair of the world*

Talmud Torah...  
*learning*

Simcha...  
*joy & celebration*

Rachamim...  
*compassion*

#### BUILD A SUSTAINABLE AND FINANCIALLY SOLVENT COMMUNITY

##### 1. Employ highly effective development practices to maintain and ensure financial stability.

- Revitalize Fundraising Committee.
- Implement ongoing effort to educate CBI members regarding financial, operating and capital needs and long range vision for financial sustainability.

##### 2. Develop a plan to expand and increase funding and targeted giving.

- Review areas where increased funding is needed and develop a plan.
- Solicit donations and pledges to raise funds to complete all areas of the new synagogue.

##### 3. Identify alternate sources of income.

- Develop annual synagogue event open to the greater community.
- Create a Legacy Fund for future bequests.

##### 4. Create a Building Fund for the Future to assist with ongoing maintenance.

*"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."* Alan Lakein

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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Feedback given by our members in a series of town hall meetings, board retreats and a High Holy Day questionnaire identified what our members perceived as the congregation's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Based on these results, a determination was made regarding where Congregation Beth Israel is today, what opportunities can be leveraged to get us where we want to be in the future and what needs to happen to get us there.

As a result, five strategic priorities were identified. The intent of these priorities is to focus on the issues and/or challenges that Congregation Beth Israel must address and act upon in the coming years to ensure sustainability.

#### WORSHIP

##### #1 Provide inspiring worship experiences or spiritual fulfillment.

- **Create sacred experiences and opportunities to better engage adults** (e.g. different types of prayer services, make services more user-friendly, inclusive, provide pastoral care for life cycle events, etc.).
- **Create sacred experiences and opportunities to better engage families and children** (e.g. different types of prayer services for families, recognize Bar/Bat Mitzvahs in meaningful ways, etc.).
- **Experiment with new models of worship** (e.g. alternative services, opportunities to read Torah, etc.).
- **Offer meaningful Jewish holiday celebrations** (e.g. Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Hanukkah, Tu B'shvat, Purim, Passover, Lag B'Omer, Shavuot, Yom HaZikaron, Yom Ha'atzmaut, etc.).

#### COMMUNITY

##### #2 Develop a vibrant Jewish Community with opportunities to connect, create and contribute.

- **Implement ongoing member recruitment strategy for continued synagogue growth** (e.g. welcome and connect with new members and provide opportunities for them to engage).
- **Implement ongoing retention program** (e.g. meeting needs of new/current members, recognize and integrate needs/skills of members, etc.).

**#2 Develop a vibrant Jewish Community with opportunities to connect, create and contribute.**

- **Create and launch new programming vision to serve member in reach and outreach** (e.g. take into account different target groups and types of programs of interest, develop program to capture/highlight history of Congregation Beth Israel, develop events with public appeal and with community organizations, etc.).
- **Establish a more deliberate and conscious process for synagogue leadership** (e.g. identify opportunities for leadership development, create pathways for congregants to progress through committees and onto board and officer positions, etc.).
- **Demonstrate caring for our synagogue Congregants as well as Jewish non-members who are unable to go out or need assistance** (e.g. contact and visit those in need of assistance and offer services of Congregation Beth Israel, etc.).
- **Develop a plan to celebrate moving into new synagogue** (e.g. ribbon cutting ceremony, placing mezuzah on door post, invite representatives from URJ, members of local government, etc.).

### JEWISH LEARNING

**#3 Be a responsive center of Jewish learning for every age and stage of life.**

- **Provide adult learning opportunities that value intellectual inquiry and expressions** (e.g. Shabbat morning Torah study, Adult B'nai Mitzvah class, Judaism 201, Torah Trope learning, Aleph Bet Ease, Siddur-Words of the heart, wings of the soul, Pirke Avot-learning from our sages, Living Room Learning, etc.).
- **Offer a variety of youth engagement opportunities** (e.g. develop curriculum that educates students about Jewish "Building Blocks" and connect this knowledge with day-to-day issues, provide parent education and socializing opportunities to foster Jewish learning and community building, guide Bar/Bat Mitzvah students through meaningful social action projects, encourage youth group participation and Jewish camp and Israeli program experiences, etc.).
- **Provide a rich hub for Hebrew Learning as an integral part of Jewish life** (e.g. enhance Keshet B'ivrit program, develop a variety of resources for Hebrew learning at home, etc.).

**#4 Translate Jewish values into social action projects in the community and the world.**

- **Create a culture of volunteers who are actively involved in putting Jewish values into action** (e.g. renew social action programs and initiatives, be at the forefront in environmental sustainability, support advocacy related to prison reform and gun control, develop a plan to identify and resist racial intolerance, identify opportunities to connect with other religious organizations who share same values, etc.).

### SYNAGOGUE GOVERNANCE

**#5 Achieve a highly effective synagogue governance, management and systems structure that is transparent and responsive to current and future needs.**

- **Develop a clear, meaningful and relevant communication plan** (e.g. explore new opportunities to disseminate information, redesign website, develop social media plan, keeping in mind target audiences etc.).
- **Oversee building maintenance, space planning needs and manage building facilities** (e.g. maintain building manual with details of all building systems, develop a plan, process and rental prices for various areas of interior and exterior of synagogue, etc.).
- **Conduct periodic assessment of the synagogue's security plan** (e.g. develop comprehensive and up-to-date emergency and disaster plans, provide professional security at agreed upon religious services and affiliated functions, etc.).
- **Integrate planning and evaluation into synagogue operations** (e.g. continue to oversee annual plan and strategic plan on an ongoing basis, develop key performance metrics and establish ongoing evaluation process, etc.).
- **Recruit and retain highest caliber of clergy and staff** (e.g. assess staff capacities and structure to align with synagogue's mission, vision and strategic goals, conduct regular employee reviews to ensure HR policies and practices are comprehensive and up-to-date, etc.).

**#5 Achieve a highly effective synagogue governance, management and systems structure that is transparent and responsive to current and future needs.**

- **Strengthen governance** (e.g. create clear job descriptions/ procedures for serving on committees, ensure Board of Directors is strategic, high functioning and effective, advance and oversee composition of board of directors, develop a sustainable committee structure, respond to requests to draft policies and/or procedures as needed, etc.).
- **Confirm a comprehensive management and systems plan are in place** (e.g. assure audit controls, membership, financial and personnel management, record keeping, billing, payments and acknowledgments meet highest level for nonprofit performance and accountability, verify all insurance policies are up to date and provide adequate insurance for personnel, events, synagogue building and future disasters, maintain cemetery records and policies, coordinate sale of cemetery plots, etc.)

### Strategic Planning & Implementation Team

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### Board of Directors

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There is a scene in the Torah that eloquently demonstrates the elements that make a true Jewish community. When the non-Jewish prophet Balaam looks down upon the tribes of Israel, he exclaims *Mah Tovu O'halecha Yaakov, Mishkenotecha Yisrael*: How goodly are your tents O Jacob, your dwelling places O Israel. Balaam's words declare praise for the tents he saw before him from the mountaintop and express hope for what their experience (and ours) in these Jewish tents should be.

In every generation the question of “*what makes the tents and dwelling places so good*,” is critically important. The Rabbis answered the question in terms of mutual respect. What would make Congregation Beth Israel a community whose goodness would be worth celebrating? What would make Congregation Beth Israel a place where the sense of sanctity is relevant, meaningful and not reserved to the sanctuary alone? What would make Congregation Beth Israel a place where the love for Jews, Judaism and the State of Israel is palpable? What would make Congregation Beth Israel a place that reaches out to individuals and communities outside of its doors and seeks to make a difference to the world around?

If we are to become the synagogue that we are capable of being, then every encounter with Congregation Beth Israel should elicit the words Balaam: “*Mah Tovu*: how goodly are your tents “. We hope our sanctuaries will connect us more deeply with God. We hope our schools will enlighten us with lessons of Torah. We hope our tents of meeting will be open and inviting to all. We hope our tents are made good by our voices and our presence.

And so, we embark on this next phase of life in Congregation Beth Israel, standing on the shoulders of those who have come before, celebrating all that we have accomplished and working together on what still needs to be done.

Judaism is a tradition that teaches:

It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task.

Yet you are not free to desist from it. *Pirke A vot*.