



Re-Imagining our Beth El Home



Chevre,

On Sunday, January 19, 2014 (18 Sh'vat 5774) the Working Group for Building & Grounds held a workshop entitled "Re-Imagining our Beth El Home" in Beth El's sanctuary and Social Hall. The workshop was, by all measures, a resounding success. Over 100 congregants engaged in the process of thinking, dreaming, questioning and offering opinions, ideas, concerns and hopes for the future of "this other rich and sacred home of ours", as Chair Ilana Saraf aptly stated in her opening remarks.

Following Ilana's introduction, scholar Eric Meyers provided a fascinating and moving historical and demographic context for the discussion. Co-chair Nathan Bearman summarized the findings of the Building Assessment (<http://bit.ly/BE-bg13>), completed recently by local firm Ellen Cassilly & Assoc., and a Use Assessment completed by synagogue staff (see survey link below to give us your assessment). Finally, Rabbi Greyber's d'var offered a spiritual perspective on ritual space as well as examples from our texts to frame further thoughts on the meaning and purpose of our places for worship and gathering.

Congregant Kevin Leibel, founder and principal of Innovation Management Assoc., led fellow community members in a structured exercise during which people moved from one table to another to consider various aspects of our facilities and their use. At tables such as "Prayer & Ritual," "Lifecycle Events," "Welcome/General Feeling," and "Special Needs/Accessibility," as well as a table devoted to the Orthodox Kehillah, congregants participated in an open forum, offering thoughts, insights, ideas - any input germane to the table topic. Hosts at each table captured ideas and posted them for all to see. All of the information generated by this workshop will be summarized and reported to the congregation, as well as made available on Beth El's website, within the coming weeks.

To view pictures of the event, including the final "idea posters" from each table, please visit our online album at: <http://bit.ly/r-ioBEh>

Many people in our Beth El community have deep and strong connections to our physical synagogue. As was anticipated and became clear during the workshop, there are also many opinions, considerations, concerns, grand and new ideas and real fears - and all have a place in our investigation. We are at the beginning of this exploration and will continue to gather community input in the months to come.

For the reference of congregants who weren't able to attend the Workshop, the following summarizes the charge given to this committee by Beth El's Board of Trustees (came out of the strategic plan):

The Working Group for Buildings & Grounds was created by Beth El's Strategic Plan and charged by the Board to:

- Present options to the board as to possible directions for making improvements to our buildings and grounds.*
- Engage the community in discussions on the future of our congregation's physical spaces.*
- Engage an architect in the process*

[Click here to view a timeline representing where we are in this process.](#)

What can you do now?

We are asking those congregants who were unable to be at the workshop, or who did not have a chance to fill out the 3-question index card, to take a moment to answer the following short survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JWS5677>

We welcome and encourage everyone's input, whether specific or general, positive, negative or speculative! If you have things to share in regards to Beth El's facilities - buildings, grounds, property - please seek out a member of the Working Group for Buildings & Grounds:

Nathan Bearman, Co-chair (nathan@furniturelab.com)	Eric Meyers
Caitlin Pitt, Co-chair (caitlinpitt1@gmail.com)	Alexis Poss
Ilana Saraf, Co-chair (ilanasaraf@nc.rr.com)	Matthew Rascoff
Sandy Berman	Jennifer Resnick
Meytal Cohen	Barak Richman
Rabbi Greyber	Orit Ramler Szulik
David Klapper	Norman Weiner
Kevin Leibel	

Please join in the discussion by answering the survey above! Stay tuned for information regarding the results of the Re-Imagining Beth El Workshop and subsequent activities. We are excited to be leading this conversation, to begin to envision together what the future may hold for our Beth El home.

B'Shalom,

Beth El Working Group for Buildings & Grounds