

March 1, 2001

To: Members of the Beth Israel Center

Dear Member:

As incoming president of the Board of the Beth Israel Center, I am asking for your help in developing a strategic plan designed to ensure the viability and effectiveness of our congregation.

Rationale: It is important for members of an organization to understand, agree to and be willing to act on the goals and mission of that organization. In order to get where you want to go, you need to have an idea of where you are going. The process of designing a strategic plan, complete with mission statement, values and belief statements that we come to accept by consensus, allows us to focus on whatever we decide matters most to us.

The Process: I suggest using the following strategy to gather input and allow all members of the congregation to participate in the development of this plan.

1. **Starting with what we have:** The process of re-evaluating who we are, why we are together and what we hope to gain and produce through our interacting builds on the effort of Center members who have done such good work to date. Beth Israel Center's mission statement was developed as part of its by laws in 1958. That mission statement will be used as a foundation as we continue the conversation regarding where we should go next.
2. **Gathering Input:** Included in this letter is a survey we ask each Beth Israel Center member to fill out. Please share it with each member of your family. Feel free to make copies. The information gathered through this process will inform the work of those who participate on the strategic planning committee.
3. **Strategic Planning Committee:** The strategic planning committee will meet at least 4 times during the summer and early fall. The goal of this committee will be to fashion a document that will incorporate the concerns and ideas gathered through the survey and serve as a draft for the entire congregation to consider. The committee will discuss its progress with the Board of Directors on a regular basis.
4. **Congregational Decision:** The congregation will have the opportunity to review and comment on the document before sending it back to the strategic planning committee for one last review. After that review the congregation will utilize a predetermined decision making mechanism in determining adoption of the strategic plan.
5. **Asset Mapping:** Once we have decided where we are going, we will utilize a process known as asset mapping to determine what skills the different members of the congregation bring to the table. Going through this process will allow us to more effectively ask members for help that they have indicated they are willing to give and that will move our congregation towards accomplishing its mission.
6. **Action.** Once the strategic plan and asset mapping are in place steps we will develop a plan of action to move as a congregation toward our goals. We will be consistently asking members, both young and old, questions regarding how they can help, and inviting their assistance. This in no way precludes members of the congregation and the Board from taking action to strengthen our community prior to the completion of this process.

Why me? When I was asked to consider the honor of serving as president of the Board of Beth Israel I thought long and hard regarding whether I was the right person for this position at this time. I concluded that I was for the following reasons:

1. I don't have a lot of preconceived notions regarding what direction the Center should take, I am simply convinced that we need to all agree on what those directions, our mission and priorities should be. The fact that I have little vested interest in the particulars of the outcome, and that I have a significant interest in the validity of the outcome, makes me an ideal facilitator for this process.
2. I have experience in bringing people from a range of viewpoints together to develop common goals and plans. I have participated in the creation of a number of strategic plans and am comfortable with the process.

I am excited about what we can achieve together and welcome the thoughts, inputs and ideas of all members. I view my potential tenure as president as an opportunity to help steer Beth Israel onto a course that we will all feel good about and to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with the men and women of this wonderful congregation.

Sincerely:

Lou Tamler

Beth Israel Center

Strategic Plan Information Survey

The following survey is intended to be filled out by each member of the Beth Israel Center to begin developing a strategic plan that energizes and meets the needs of all members.

Contact Information: (optional)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

email _____

A goal of this process is to recognize that we have limited resources and determine how to most effectively focus those resources. In each section of this survey each member is given 5 votes that can be distributed however they see fit (If one idea is clearly most important to you, feel free to give it five votes. Feel free to distribute your votes however you choose.)

Mission Statement: The following are statements that might appear in our mission statement. Some come directly from Beth Israel's current by-laws. Remember that a mission statement needs to be clear and concise. A mission statement does not usually include actions. Please distribute five votes among these options.

- ___ To secure the advancement of the Jewish religion according to its faith.
- ___ To promote the civic improvement of its members.
- ___ To promote the educational improvement of its members.
- ___ To promote the spiritual improvement of its members.
- ___ To provide a means and guidance for members to live in a Jewish manner.
- ___ To provide a structure that allows for members to participate in tezdakah.
- ___ To provide a place to gather, worship and learn.
- ___ To sponsor with equal emphasis cultural and social activities, a synagogue and an academic center.

In the space below please list other statements or ideas that you feel should be incorporated into a Beth Israel Center Mission Statement, other comments or concerns and/or draw up a draft of a mission statement for the strategic planning committee to consider.

Beliefs and Values: The following are statements that might be included in a document that outlines the basic beliefs that form the foundation of the Beth Israel Center. Please distribute five votes as you see fit.

- It is essential that there be physical presence for the Jewish community in the South Hills
- Beth Israel Center should serve as a voice sharing Jewish concerns and issues with the larger community.
- The Jewish education of our children is a fundamental responsibility of our congregation.
- Lifelong Jewish education is a critical piece of maintaining a healthy and vibrant congregation
- All Jewish organizations should encourage tzedakah
- Jewish organizations should make every effort to act in accordance with all Jewish laws
- Beth Israel Center should act in accordance with conservative Jewish laws and doctrines.
- Vibrant organizations include opportunities for all members to take action
- Religious organizations should be open to all comers regardless of ability to pay
- Growth in membership is the responsibility of all members.
- Beth Israel Center must remain debt free and financially healthy

Please use the space below to add other beliefs and values that you feel should be included in a set of Beth Israel Center Belief and Values statements

Actions: The following are actions that are being considered that may help Beth Israel Center fulfill its mission and act according to its values and beliefs. Please distribute five votes as you see fit.

- A Rabbi should be hired, on at least a part time basis.
- Adult education opportunities should be continued and expanded.
- More Saturday services should be offered.
- Opportunities for young adults to contribute to the center should be expanded
- The education program should be offered to children from other congregations.

Please use the space below to list other actions you feel are important for Beth Israel Center to consider.

Are your interested in serving on the strategic plan committee? (it will meet four times during the summer and early fall) ____ yes ____ no