



The Campaign for Temple Sinai



In 2015, Temple Sinai celebrated its 75th anniversary during a period of rapid change. Over the past decade, temple membership has grown more than 35 percent and the number of children in the religious school has increased by two-thirds. At the same time, the overall composition of the congregation has altered dramatically. More than 40 percent of today's members joined the temple in the last five years and at least half of those households include young children.

Our Community is Growing

This influx of new members has already contributed to important innovations in temple programming and activities in recent years. For example, in response to members' requests for more opportunities to interact informally with one another, Temple Sinai now hosts monthly Shabbat dinners that regularly seat 50 to 70 congregants.

In addition, our religious school has revamped its post-B'nai Mitzvah program in an effort to keep our teens engaged. The current model is more flexible than in the past, offering youth a menu of options designed to promote Jewish learning in a context that strengthens their relationships with one another and with the congregation as a whole.

The temple has also greatly expanded its adult learning program to accommodate a fast-growing group of enthusiastic students. Furthermore, the social action arm of our temple, Tzedek@Sinai, has partnered with the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization to facilitate engagement within our community around social justice issues.

Our Needs Are Clear

Such changes represent steps in the right direction, but clearly more is needed. In conversations with Temple Sinai leaders and at parent feedback sessions, our members have repeatedly asked for more opportunities to engage with one another.

This hunger for connection mirrors a national Jewish movement toward “relational Judaism,” which focuses on fostering relationships within congregations in order to encourage lifelong Jewish engagement. The premise of the movement is built on the observation that people are often attracted to a synagogue initially by its programming, but they will stay only if the temple succeeds in helping them build meaningful and lasting relationships with one another.

After many months of discussion by many Temple members, we agree we must consider making significant investments in our buildings and our education and youth programs. Accordingly, our community’s leadership intends to seek philanthropic support from every member of the congregation to begin transforming Temple Sinai to ensure its vibrancy and relevance through to our centennial celebration.

We launched the “Campaign for Temple Sinai” in May 2015, as a way to support that vision. For this campaign, we ask our members to consider making a meaningful commitment that is payable over a five-year period, to help us reach our goal of \$2.7 million. We also strive for 100% participation – that every member of Temple Sinai participates in the Campaign.

The following priorities have emerged that may be addressed through our milestone fund raising effort:

#1: Establish funding for a full-time Community Engagement Professional

Relationship building on the scale of an entire congregation requires dedicated leadership, and our professional staff will be critical for providing the kind of vision, spiritual guidance and strategic thinking needed to make relational Judaism a reality at our temple.

With this in mind, the Temple Sinai Board of Trustees voted in August 2014 to reorganize our staff so that it will include a full-time Community Engagement Professional—a Jewish teacher and role model who will build up our community by helping our members establish relationships with each other and with our clergy. In July 2015 Assistant Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman began work and is connecting with our youth and teens while empowering our members of all ages to claim and create Judaism for themselves within the framework of our temple.

Therefore we have established a Community Engagement Fund of \$250,000 that is earmarked for expenses related to staff involved in relationship building within our congregation. This fund will be spent down over a period of five to six years, providing \$ 40,000-50,000 annually to help support the Community Engagement Professional.

We anticipate that by the time the fund is completely spent down, the Community Engagement Professional's position will help pay for itself by increasing the number of new members and improving membership retention. That expectation seems reasonable given the recent growth in membership. Assuming the Community Engagement Professional helps us continue that trend, we would expect our numbers to grow to more than 350 households by 2018.

#2: Make major renovations to the temple's spaces and structures

In addition to our staff, our physical spaces require change to accommodate our growing community and the requirements of an environment that are accessible to all of our members. We need to make our spaces more inviting and more conducive to establishing and maintaining relationships among our community. Currently, congregants must navigate a maze of stairways and corridors to get from the religious school to the sanctuary.

These concerns led the Board of Trustees to commission the production of an architectural master plan that would allow us to imagine how certain elements of our building might be reconfigured to facilitate greater connection among our members. After many months of discussion, which included congregational input and feedback, the Board voted to approve the plan in September 2014. Based upon subsequent discussions, a final renovation plan was approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2016. The main elements of the plan are described below.

Renovate the first floor of the religious school building and connect it to the sanctuary

The plan calls for the creation of an enlarged and updated lobby in our school building, which will serve as a Welcome Center, providing a friendly, attractive, welcoming and spacious entryway for all who come. Our Main Office will be reoriented and re-positioned, so that our administrative staff may welcome those who walk through our front doors; a glass-plate window will allow for immediate interaction with those who enter the building. Comfortable seating will be available.

Weintraub Auditorium will have a new entryway, with new glass doors that invite people to come in. We will build a new accessible walkway to the sanctuary with new flooring, paint and lighting. The orientation of the room will be changed from N-S to E-W to enhance the flexibility of the room and to enable the installation of built-in audio-visual equipment for our many teachers and speakers. Additional A/V hookups will also be installed in Ehrenfried. In addition, the auditorium will feature built-in bookshelves and a coffee bar. This portion of the project, including the elevator, sprinklers, and accessibility options will cost approximately \$1.85 million.



Rendering of the proposed renovated Weintraub Auditorium, with coffee bar and passageway to Sanctuary

Improving Classroom Spaces

Temple Sinai’s classroom space is in desperate need of updating. The new plan will provide for new flooring, new ceiling lighting, fresh coats of paint, enhanced Wi-Fi and Ethernet wiring, upgraded electrical wiring, several new air conditioners, whiteboards and closet renovations. These improvements will go a long way toward making the children’s learning experience more productive and enjoyable. The estimated cost of these improvements is approximately \$290,000.

Making Temple Sinai more accessible to all

Our structure is old and in serious need of modernizing to provide access to all of our present and prospective members. These improvements include:

- Construction of a direct link between Weintraub Auditorium and the sanctuary through the alley that now divides the two structures. This will enable our members, including those in wheelchairs, to easily access the sanctuary through the religious school.
- The first floor toilet facility will be handicap accessible and reachable from the sanctuary without the need to negotiate stairs or to walk outside the building in inclement weather.
- A small elevator will be added to provide vertical access between the basement, first floor and second floor.
- An inclined wheelchair lift will serve the bima in the sanctuary.
- Doorways to the school building, Weintraub auditorium, and all second floor rooms will be widened and re-oriented, if necessary, so that they can be negotiated by a person in a wheelchair; handrails in the front school stairway will be replaced.
- Drinking fountains will be replaced with accessible drinking fountains.
- The fire alarm system will be modified to provide horns, strobes and all accessible features.

Meeting the Needs of Today, Planning for the Needs of Tomorrow

Throughout our history, Temple Sinai has continually evolved in response to the changing needs of its congregation. If we are to rise to the challenges of building the durable and meaningful connections that our next generation members are asking for, we must make significant investments in our buildings and our staff. These new members represent the future of our temple. Our plans will require major financial commitments from generous individuals, families and businesses represented within our congregation. Leadership philanthropy from Temple Sinai's steadfast community will be critical to our success.

We hope we can count on your generous participation.

