



Temple Beth Ami Green Initiative

Introduction

Being environmentally responsible is a Jewish value. Jewish tradition teaches us that humans have a responsibility both to protect nature and prevent it from abuse. In a Midrash, God commands us to *"Take care not to spoil or destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you."* Reform Judaism's concept of Tikkun Olam, or repairing the world, stresses the importance of social action and environmentalism. The Torah emphasizes our social responsibility to care for the environment so that we may protect, preserve, and promote the prosperity of all of the wildlife with which we share the Earth. As it is written, *"God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to till it and tend to it"* (Genesis 2:15).

Based on our Jewish values and traditions, TBA has begun to explore and consider how we might apply environmentally conscious ideas to Temple practices as well as help TBA members apply environmentally conscious practices in their daily lives.

Goals

1. The principal goal of TBA's green initiative is to explore options for saving energy, purchasing clean power, going solar, and shifting other aspects of TBA's purchasing and practices to minimize environmental impact.
2. Additional goals are to:
 - a. Engage congregation members in TBA's greening effort;
 - b. Increase congregation members' awareness of and engagement in ways to reduce their carbon footprint in their daily lives;
 - c. Develop TBA's reputation within our congregation and externally as a green congregation; and
 - d. Reduce operating expenses.

Structure

The project will be implemented through a steering committee and working group subcommittees. Each subcommittee will have a representative on the steering committee. The expectation is that most of the work will be done at the subcommittee level, with the steering committee coordinating the activities.

Areas of Focus

1. Installing solar panels on the Temple roof
2. Composting, gardening, and landscaping
3. Recycling, use of sustainable products, and food recovery
4. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), and lighting

Key Factors for Consideration

1. Other synagogues and faith congregations have already engaged in this exercise. Tapping into their knowledge and expertise is important.
2. In developing recommendations, we need to be mindful that the recommendations should be workable and not unduly burdensome. We should strive to develop implementation strategies that are reasonable, easy to follow, and data driven.
3. An important starting point for each working group subcommittee is understanding TBA's current policies/practices in each area.
4. Implementation may occur at different times for different aspects of the green initiative. When we move to an implementation stage, we will need to train people to implement the new practices/policies—including congregants, staff, custodial staff, and vendors (e.g., caterers).
5. We can research the availability of grants to help support the green initiative.
6. We should identify other actions we could engage in as part of this effort, such as exploring the feasibility and attractiveness from a savings perspective of group-purchasing efforts.
7. Part of the goal of this initiative could be to energize TBA members to increase their green practices at home. There are many resources that include recommendations for ways to promote energy efficiencies in the home.

Possible Sources of Information/Ideas (in addition to contacting other congregations that have already undertaken green efforts)

- <https://ipldmv.org/>
- <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/257241/making-synagogues-sustainable>
- <https://www.usgbc.org/articles/9-ways-make-your-home-greener>
- <https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/greener-living>
- <http://rejnj.org/>
- <https://earthministry.org/greening-congregations/> and <https://earthministry.org/for-congregations/>