

# *Temple Beth-El Visioning Steering Committee*

## **TEMPLE BETH-EL**

### **‘ONE COMMUNITY – ONE CAMPUS’ SURVEY REPORT**

**June 13, 2017**

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## **BACKGROUND**

Temple Beth-El's 'One Community – One Campus' initiative seeks to achieve a single Beth-El campus to provide a central location for core Beth-El religious, educational, social, and community centered activities. A survey was developed by the Visioning Steering Committee to assess Beth-El stakeholder perspectives on the types of activities, characteristics, prayer environment, and functions of an ideal campus. Questions were developed using input from Vision Steering Committee members, an established list of home buying motives, and results from eight focus groups with Beth-El members conducted in the Fall of 2016 and Winter of 2017.

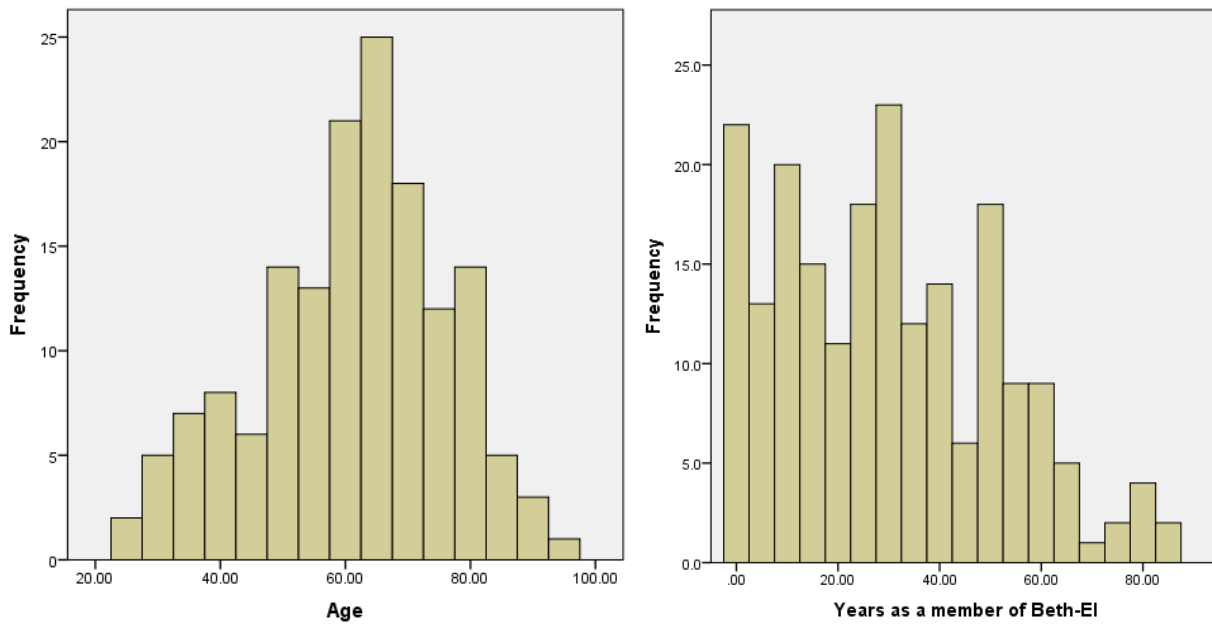
The survey consisted of 83 total questions asking about demographic characteristics of respondents, motivations for affiliation with Beth-El, current levels of engagement, design preferences, and perceived importance of various functions associated with a campus site. The first section asked about respondent age, gender, number of children, years as a Beth-El member and zip code. The second section of the survey asked respondents to rate the importance of eight core benefits or functions of a campus site including prayer, adult learning, youth education, social activities, spiritual connection, being among fellow congregants, and life-cycle events. The third section of the survey asked about the frequency with which respondents engage in Beth-El related functions or activities. The fourth section asked for user preferences regarding 23 features or characteristics of a campus site. The fifth section included 20 questions about engagement with a campus. The sixth section of the survey asked the likelihood of increasing engagement if an improved campus site were available. Finally, the last section asked for open ended comments about the factors that drive level of engagement, barriers to engagement, and preferred characteristics of a campus site. This report provides results of the survey analysis and conclusions for interpreting the data for future planning.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Surveys were sent either through email using an online link or mailed to approximately 900 individuals representing Beth-El members or those affiliated with Beth-El (e.g., potential members) with 215 people completing the survey (60% Female). Note that all emails associated with Beth-El were used for the distribution list and multiple emails may be listed for one individual. In addition, it is likely that some households were represented by one individual response even though multiple individuals within the household were sent emails. Hence, the response rate may be underestimated.

Respondent ages ranged from 25 to 93 years with an average age of 61 (Figure 1). Eighty percent of respondents were over the age of 47 with 50% over the age of 62. Only 10% of those who responded were under the age of 35 (14 out of 154 who reported their age). The most common number of children per respondent was 2 children (50%), followed by 3 (22%) and 0 children (13%). Children ages ranged from less than 1 to 68 years of age. Twenty-seven respondents indicated they had Hebrew school aged children. About 11% of respondents said they were not current Beth-El members. The average number of years as a Beth-El member was 30 years with approximately 20% reporting 10 years or less as Beth-El member. Survey respondents reported living in 29 different area codes. (table on following page)

**Figure 1.** Frequency of respondent ages (left) and years as a Beth-El member (right)



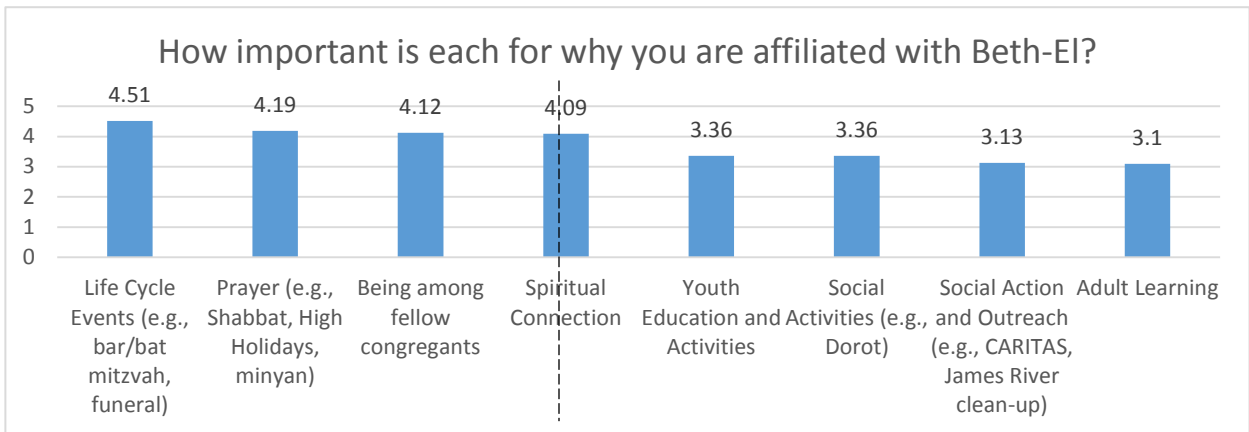
## MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR AFFILIATION

Figure 2 (following page) shows ratings of importance related to eight factors explaining *why someone is affiliated with Beth-El*. A rating of 1 indicated an item was not an important factor, and a rating of 5 indicated an item was very important for affiliation. Factors to the left of the dotted line in the figure can be interpreted to be more important to members overall when compared to factors located to the right of the dotted line.

*Life Cycle Events* such as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or funerals was rated most important to respondents on average (Average = 4.51). The items most associated with religious activities such as prayer and spiritual connection were generally rated as more important than other social functions. Given this, all categories received an average rating of 3 meaning all factors were at least somewhat important on average.

### Other Motivating Factors

Survey respondents were asked to list any other benefits or functions of a campus site that are important motivators impacting affiliation with Beth-El. One theme that emerged from the comments focused on an *existential need* to continue the Jewish religion, grow Jewish practice and ensure generational transitions in Jewish knowledge. One comment noted “being part of the continuation of the Jewish religion” while another said “sustainability and survivability of conservative Judaism in Richmond.” Another comment mentioned that Beth-El was the only place to go for conservative Jewish Education for their family, while they may have other choices (e.g., JCC) for social activities.



**Figure 2.** Mean ratings of importance for why respondents are affiliated

## CURRENT LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

The next set of survey questions asked participants to rate how often they engage in different Beth-El activities. Table 1 shows the percentage of responses in each category across all activities rated so that all row values add up to 100%. Respondents indicated the highest level of engagement was associated with Prayer activities and Social activities such as Sisterhood or Men’s Club. A few times a year was the most frequent category reported across all activities indicating most activities are not attended on a monthly or regular basis. Social Action/outreach and Adult Learning showed the lowest levels of engagement overall. Open ended comments identified participation on committees as another activity individuals engaged in.

**Table 1.** How frequently do you attend each type of activity? (% responding in each category) (N = 215)

	Never	Only during the High Holidays	High Holidays and occasionally for other services	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month	Weekly	More than once a week
Prayer (e.g., Shabbat, High Holidays, minyan)	1%	1%	44%	12%	9%	14%	13%	6%
Adult Learning	50%	0%	0%	38%	4%	3%	5%	0%
Youth Education and Activities	67%	0%	0%	12%	4%	10%	4%	3%
Social Activities (e.g., Sisterhood, Men’s Club)	19%	0%	0%	64%	13%	3%	1%	0%
Social Action and Outreach (e.g., CARITAS, James River clean-up)	53%	0%	0%	41%	1%	2%	2%	1%

## PREFERRED FEATURES OF A CAMPUS SITE

Respondents rated their agreement (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree) with statements describing preferences for different features of a campus site. Items were developed based on themes which emerged from focus groups conducted during 2016-2017 and input from Beth-El Visioning Steering Committee members. Table 2 (on following page) shows average agreement ratings for each item out of a total possible score of 5. Higher ratings indicate more people agreed overall with that statement compared to items with lower ratings. Statements highlighted in green identify the items where there was strongest agreement overall. It is important to note that average ratings represent all age groups and 90% of respondents were over the age 35, thus potentially biasing total averages and frequencies towards preferences of older members. Additional analysis should be considered to compare importance ratings among different age groups to look for differences in preferences between age groups. The statements receiving the highest level of agreement among respondents were related to designing a campus that is conducive for multiple generations to observe, pray with, and interact with each other. There were some mixed ratings on whether people preferred close or more intimate space with further analysis revealing variability in attitudes between genders and age on preferences for the type of prayer space. Items highlighted in yellow show examples of statements where there is considerable variability in preferences among respondents. (table on following page)

**Table 2.** Response frequencies and mean agreement. (Total responses = 216)

Rate your agreement with each item:	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Average
I like to see individuals from other generations on a campus at the same time	2%	14%	84%	4.36
I like a prayer space that is conducive to people of all ages praying together including young children	9%	18%	73%	4.01
There should be adequate common space for impromptu social interactions	4%	28%	68%	3.94
There should be flexible meeting space	5%	36%	59%	3.78
A prayer space should provide me a sense of joy	8%	33%	59%	3.72
Natural light is important to me	9%	33%	58%	3.70
Ease of access to bathroom facilities is important	13%	28%	59%	3.69
I would like to spend more time with my family at Beth-El	7%	40%	53%	3.65
I enjoy praying where I have ample personal space	13%	41%	46%	3.49
Generally I like the feeling of a large prayer space	15%	42%	43%	3.37
I prefer to pray in bigger groups	11%	59%	30%	3.25
I enjoy praying in a space where people are physically close to one another	20%	41%	39%	3.24
Praying in close proximity to the clergy makes me feel engaged	76%	18%	6%	3.23
I get inspired when looking up at the clergy on a raised Bimah	31%	39%	30%	2.96
Limited access to parking would prevent me from attending activities	43%	18%	39%	2.86
I like the feeling of an intimate prayer space	31%	51%	18%	2.79
I like to be physically close to the Bimah (pulpit) when I pray	33%	48%	19%	2.78
I feel more spiritually uplifted when I am praying in a small group	38%	50%	12%	2.60
Security concerns are often over estimated	49%	25%	26%	2.60
I am sometimes concerned about security when attending Beth-El activities	54%	19%	27%	2.51
Smaller prayer spaces make me feel closer to G-d	54%	38%	8%	2.11
I feel disconnected when looking up at the clergy on a raised Bimah	70%	21%	9%	1.85
Praying in close proximity to the clergy makes me feel nervous	18%	45%	37%	1.71

## FEATURE IMPORTANCE

Respondents rated the importance of campus site features using a 5 point scale where a 1=not important and a 5=very important. Table 3 shows average importance ratings for campus site features. Items with higher average ratings are considered more important for a campus compared to statements with lower ratings.

The highest rated items were related to celebrating life cycle events, projecting Jewish identity, spaces for elderly and children, good acoustics, spaces for socializing, and security. Items related to recreational activities, learning, outdoor spaces, and geographic proximity were rated lower, although all items except for a sense of connection to nature were rated a 3 or higher. Items rated as most important should be prioritized in the design phases of the campus site.

**Table 3.** Mean importance ratings for features of a campus site.

How important is each item when thinking about an ideal campus?	Not Important		Very Important			Average
	1	2	3	4	5	
Celebrating life cycle events	-	-	7%	27%	66%	4.60
Projecting a sense of Jewish identity	1%	1%	9%	28%	61%	4.51
Space for celebrations and social functions	-	1%	8%	35%	56%	4.47
Ease of access for the elderly and those with disabilities	1%	2%	11%	28%	58%	4.41
Good sound and acoustics	-	1%	11%	37%	51%	4.39
Opportunities to socialize with others	1%	2%	13%	35%	49%	4.29
Adequate space for children / children's activities	1%	3%	16%	31%	49%	4.25
Time to spend with family	2%	1%	16%	37%	44%	4.17
Security	2%	3%	22%	33%	40%	4.07
A place to share meals with others	1%	4%	18%	43%	34%	4.04
Reminders of our connection to previous generations	3%	4%	17%	39%	37%	4.02
Opportunities for learning	2%	6%	26%	36%	30%	3.86
Open and inviting entry way	3%	7%	21%	44%	25%	3.82
Space for recreational activities	8%	12%	31%	32%	17%	3.40
Opportunities for meditation / reflection	8%	11%	35%	29%	17%	3.35
Outdoor spaces for group interaction	9%	11%	40%	30%	10%	3.22
Space(s) conducive to text study / learning	7%	17%	40%	26%	10%	3.16
Geographic proximity to my house	12%	18%	33%	21%	16%	3.11
Spaces or facilities to share with the surrounding community	13%	15%	35%	27%	10%	3.08
Access to Jewish texts / library / media room	11%	19%	34%	24%	12%	3.06
A sense of connection to nature	16%	19%	41%	16%	8%	2.82

## FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

Respondents rated the degree to which an improved campus site would increase the likelihood to engage in various Beth-El activities where a value of 1 indicated an improved campus site is not likely to increase future engagement and a 5 indicated an improved campus site would very likely increase future engagement for an activity. Table 4 lists frequency of responses and average ratings of future engagement. Higher average ratings indicate that respondents are more likely to increase their level of engagement compared to items with lower average ratings. Results showed that an improved campus site would be most likely to increase engagement in celebration of life events (average = 3.73) and opportunities to socialize (average = 3.39).

**Table 4.** Frequency and average ratings of importance and standard deviations.

How likely would an improved campus increase your likelihood for:	Not likely		Very likely			Average
	1	2	3	4	5	
Celebration of life events	8%	4%	26%	31%	31%	3.73
Opportunity to socialize	11%	5%	33%	35%	16%	3.39
Frequency of visit	12%	10%	37%	30%	11%	3.18
Spending family time on location	15%	14%	36%	27%	8%	3.00

## QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

Open ended questions asked respondents to describe preferred characteristics and functions of a single campus site. Comments for each question were reviewed and grouped by common themes. Themes for each question are summarized below with examples for each theme.

### What barriers might prevent you from visiting Beth-El more?

***Building Access:*** Barriers associated with building access include parking distance from site, parking space, climbing stairs, inconvenient access to restrooms, security of parking spaces including secure parking with lights and safe surrounding areas, poor ease of access for handicap, disabled, and those with other physical limitations.

***Building condition (e.g., space, comfort):*** Barriers associated with building condition include structural problems, poor maintenance of facilities (e.g., bathroom), physical attractiveness, poor sound and acoustics, uncomfortable seating in the sanctuary, poor lighting, and loud HVAC. Interestingly, some comments disagreed with designing a more modern space because of the feeling that modern designs are cold and fail to install a sense of Jewish identity.

***Distance:*** Distance of a campus site was a significant barrier. Some suggestions were to move towards the west end of Richmond. Others suggested coordinating a bus or shuttle service.

***Time:*** Timing of services was infrequently mentioned as a barrier. One comment suggested moving Friday services a little later, to around 7:30.

***Service and program related:*** Barriers associated with the service included the use of too much Hebrew, lengthy service or longer winded sermons. Several comments identified the prevalence of non-traditional music or hymns has a barrier.



Culture: Barriers associated with culture of the campus included lack of connection to the community, limited numbers of people engaged in activities, unfriendly members, political views expressed from the pulpit, adopting non-traditional approaches, and weakening of connection with other generations.

Personal barriers: Personal barriers included lack of motivation, too many other outside commitments, challenging to bring kids or elderly, and health reasons.

Cost: Several comments identified high dues, cost, and unfair dues structure with too many exceptions.

**Describe 3 things you like most about other campuses you have visited:**

Accessibility: On-site, available, and secure parking were the most commonly identified strengths of other campuses. Other comments mentioned easy access to bathrooms, social, and eating areas.

Building and space characteristics: Open spaces with good lighting were the most common building characteristics that respondents liked about other spaces. Other building characteristics that respondents liked included connection to nature (e.g., flowing water), modern facilities (e.g., restroom), warm décor, multifunctional spaces, access to smaller intimate prayer spaces, elegant and beautiful social halls, and having activities centrally located on one campus.

Seating and Bimah Location: Preferred seating and Bimah characteristics included comfortable seating, flexible seating options with pews that have ability for more circular or U-shaped seating configurations.

Service, clergy, and music: Consistency of location of service, closer proximity to the Torah, clergy and Bimah on same level as congregation, excellent acoustics, live on-line services, Bimah in a more centralized location, children's choir, and music.

Culture and atmosphere: Comments related to culture and atmosphere included welcoming and friendly congregants, engaged congregants, multi-generational representation, identifying with tradition, and a sense of community.

**Describe 3 things you like the least about other campuses you have visited.**

Accessibility: Access to parking, confusing campus layouts negatively impacted accessibility.

Building and space characteristics: Negative characteristics associated with building and space included poorly maintained facilities, dark spaces, crowded spaces, old looking, dark color and décor. Respondents disagreed on their preferences related to general building design. Some respondents valued a more modern look while others felt modern was cold, overly glitzy, and did not instill a sense of tradition. Also, there were differences on preferences for sharing prayer spaces with other activities.

Seating and Bimah Location: Uncomfortable seating, sitting too close to other congregants, the use of pews instead of seats, and inability to see the clergy were mentioned as negative characteristics associated with seating and Bimah.

Service, clergy, and music: Many people identified they do not like the use of organs and too much music while others complained about the lack of music and organs used during prayer. Poor sound and acoustics was also another weakness observed from other campus sites.

Culture and atmosphere: Unfamiliarity with congregants or feeling unwelcome was most commonly mentioned. Many comments identified a cold feeling associated with more modern campus.

Other: Lack of security and distance were other negative characteristics mentioned.



Access: Elderly with limited mobility difficult to walk to campus, elevator too far, parking distance too far.

Comfort: Seating pews difficult to maneuver and get up for elderly. Not comfortable for sitting. Difficult to hear service.

### **What other offerings should Beth-El provide?**

Access: Valet parking, assisted walks from parking spots, security.

Programming: Social justice programs, interfaith events, musical events, shorter service for younger members. Welcoming committee for new community members. Focus on quality of programming rather than quantity of programs.

## **GROUP DIFFERENCES**

Correlations between responses and respondent characteristics were calculated. Correlations are a basic statistical measure of association between two things. In this analysis, correlations were used to gain a deeper understanding of patterns between respondent characteristics such as age with preferences such as preference for an intimate prayer space and behaviors such as current or future engagement with Beth-El. Correlation values range from 0 to 1 with a value of 0 indicating there is no association and 1 indicating there is a perfect association. Positive correlations mean that as one characteristic gets stronger so does another characteristic. A negative correlation means that as one characteristic gets stronger another gets weaker. In general, a correlation of .15 is considered weak, .25 moderate, and above .35 strong. Table 5 shows statistically significant correlations between age, survey responses, and how to interpret the correlation.

**Table 5.** Correlations between age and preferences

Items	Correlation	Results
I enjoy praying where I have ample personal space	.18	Older adults enjoy more personal space.
Natural light is important to me	-.28	Natural light was more important to younger respondents.
There should be flexible meeting space	-.18	Younger respondents had a higher need for flexible meeting space.
There should be adequate common space for impromptu social interactions	-.17	Space for informal social interaction was more important to younger respondents.
I am sometimes concerned about security when attending Beth-El activities	.24	Older individuals were more concerned with security than younger.
Security concerns are often over estimated	-.21	
Good sound & acoustics is important	.29	Older respondents have a stronger preference for high quality sound and acoustics.
Outdoor space for group interaction is important	-.16	The outdoor areas of a campus are more important to younger respondents.

## FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

Ratings from survey items asking about features of a prayer space were correlated with likelihood of increasing frequency of visits to better understand which features were most related to increased engagement. Items most related to likelihood of increasing frequency were improving access to parking and facilities and increased natural light. There was variability in preferences for spacious compared to more intimate prayer spaces and both features were related to improved frequency of visit. This indicates that having spacious prayer spaces for those who preferred spacious settings and having more intimate prayer spaces for those who preferred being closer to others and the clergy when praying would help address the diversity of needs.

**Table 6.** Correlations preferences and future engagement

	Correlation	Finding
Child 5-11	.17	Respondents with children between 5-11 years old are more likely to increase how frequently they visit because of campus improvement.
Geographic proximity	.32	Frequency of visit will increase with closer geographic proximity.
Space conducive to text study/learning	.15	Improved space for studying and learning will increase frequency of visit.
Open and inviting entryway	.26	An open and inviting entry way is likely to increase visits to the campus.
Space for recreational activities	.38	Space for recreational activities is highly likely to increase frequency of visit.
Space or facilities to share with the surrounding community	.20	Shared spaces and events with surrounding community will increase likelihood of visiting a campus.
Good sound and acoustics	.14	Good sound and acoustics will increase frequency of visit.
Space for celebrations and social functions	.17	Improved space for celebrations and social functions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Respondents to the Beth-El “One Community – One Campus” survey represented a wide range of age groups with varying years’ experience as Beth-El members. The distribution of ages across all respondents were fairly representative of Beth-El membership except for a gap in responses for those under the age of 25. Survey results reflected this variability in the specific motivations, aesthetics preferences, and prayer setting preferences of respondents. The pattern of survey results highlight some key insights.

*Celebrating life events and prayer are the most important functions and reasons for visiting a campus site.* Overall, Beth-El members felt that the most important function of a campus is to experience important life events. Experiencing life cycle events and prayer were the highest rated items for reasons why someone is affiliated with Beth-El, importance for creating an ideal campus, and represent the types of activities most likely to increase engagement after improvements to a campus are completed.

*Formation of a strong Jewish identity is most associated with respecting multiple generations, prayer, and learning and celebrating life events. Outdoor spaces and recreational activities are least important overall.* Respect and designing a campus to increase inter-generational observation and interaction was a consistent theme across survey responses. Items related to multi-generational interaction such as a common space for impromptu interactions and design choices tailored to the elderly and children were consistently rated important for most respondents. Design choices accommodating spaces for children and elderly to feel comfortable in prayer and social activities should be a priority for the design team.

*Flexible spaces to accommodate different individual preferences and activities are important.* Another pattern in the results was the diversity among respondent preferences for features, prayer space settings, and importance for youth or adult spaces for learning. Areas with the highest levels of disagreement were related to the importance of learning, recreational spaces, and outdoor areas. Good sound and acoustics was especially important for more elderly respondents. Older respondents also tended to be more concerned about security on a campus site.

*Accessibility is important.* Accessibility was rated important by respondents on survey items and in the open-ended comments. Accessibility was multifaceted and included access to parking, easy access to the Bimah, access to restrooms, and access to the main sanctuary. Interestingly, geographic proximity was rated as one of the least important factors when thinking about an ideal campus, yet was positively related to the likelihood of increase frequency of visits. This might be explained because of the stronger preference of families with younger children for a campus in closer proximity and others who live especially far from Beth-El. Further investigation comparing preferences of respondents who live farther from Beth-El with those who live closer might provide additional insight.

*People like to pray in different settings.* Items where people disagreed most were related to the intimacy of the prayer setting where some preferred to pray physically closer to others, in smaller groups, smaller spaces, in close proximity to the Bimah. Those who preferred more intimate prayer settings were more likely to value the role for opportunities for learning and meditation compared to those who preferred larger prayer spaces with more distance between clergy and individual group members. Regardless of how intimate a setting someone preferred, almost everyone agreed that a space should accommodate multiple generations.

*Frequency of visit.* The demographic *most likely* to increase their frequency of visiting Beth-El upon improvements to a campus are families with children ages 5-11. This group would prefer to spend more time with family on campus and tend to attend prayer services less frequently than other age groups. This group also prefers praying in larger groups and spaces. Improvements making it more conducive for children to attend prayer services with more personal individual space would likely increase engagement for this group. Features most associated with likelihood to visit were having an open and inviting entryway, space for recreational activities, and good sound and acoustics. Improved space to share with the community and for social functions or celebrations were also related to increased engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results from the Beth-El ‘One Community – One Campus’ survey can be used as one source of data to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of a campus site initiative. Results of this survey reflect current perceptions of how Beth-El members view an ideal campus site. Several recommendations are provided below on how best to utilize survey results.

*Preferences of respondents should be addressed when possible in design choices.* Features identified as most important and had the highest agreement among members are likely to have the biggest impact in members satisfaction with a campus. Items with higher ratings are likely to receive the most expansive support from

congregants. Characteristics with the most negative ratings are most likely to deter individuals from a campus site while items that have a lot of neutral ratings may not change engagement as much.

*Provide alternative or adaptive features for preferences where there is most disagreement among respondents.*

Consider creating flexible spaces or multiple spaces for contrasting items with similar ratings. For example, people rated they would like access to both intimate and more spacious prayer spaces. Providing traditional and modern design features in different space on campus will help address differences.

*Use a participatory user design process to optimize alignment between user preferences and design choices.*

Participatory user centered design is a process that includes individuals who will be vested in a campus site (i.e. users) representing different user groups during the design phases and implementation phases. Participatory design practices will help provide diverse opinions throughout the design process. (see [IDEO.org](http://IDEO.org))

*Perform additional data collection and analyses as needed.* This report provides a basic descriptive and correlation analysis of survey data. Other analysis using existing data or collecting additional data might be helpful. One limitation of this sample was that it was skewed towards individuals over 35 with the largest group representation from age 55-80. In addition, no one under the age of 25 was represented in the sample. Additional analyses which focus on comparing specific age groups can be completed with existing data for ages 25 or greater to gain further insights about group differences. It would also be helpful to find ways for collecting feedback from individuals under the age of 25. Another analysis might be completed utilizing existing zip code data from respondents to analyze whether member distance from campus influences preferences or engagement activates. Zip code data can also be used to investigate how demographics, utilization, and preferences might change depending on the location of a campus site.

*Monitor progress, evaluate design choices iteratively.* Design choices and actions for developing a campus site should be monitored. Survey questions or additional questions might be used to collect feedback about whether the perceived benefit of a design choice by campus site planners is aligned with the user need that design choice addresses. In addition, follow up surveys or other methods may be used after completing improvement to evaluate satisfaction.

*Invest in change management principles during the implementation process for a smoother transition.* Change is difficult and requires everyone to invest time and/or energy to adapt. Respondents to this survey emphasized the importance of alignment with expectations so that individuals feel comfortable on a campus site. Some changes inevitably will be disliked by some members, but establishing a fair and transparent process can help alleviate some of these stressors. Many change management models exist that have been shown to improve the process of organizational or culture change during redesign projects. The Kotter 8 stage model for leading change (<https://www.kotterinternational.com/8-steps-process-for-leading-change/>), participatory centered design ([www.IDEO.org](http://www.IDEO.org)), and other models can be used when planning for change.