

In a midrash, we hear that when God created Adam, God took him and showed him all the trees in the Garden of Eden, and God said to Adam: “See My creations, how beautiful and exemplary they are. Everything I created, I created for you. Make certain that you do not ruin and destroy My world, as if you destroy it, there will be no one to mend it after you.” (Kohelet Rabba, 7:13) Last year, Temple Sinai joined the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition (JCLC). The JCLC is a network of Jewish community organizations dedicated to the ethical challenge presented by climate change. With clear and convincing evidence of human contribution to the increase of CO₂ in our atmosphere, JCLC is dedicated to taking action calculated to reduce CO₂ emissions and to promoting a more sustainable use of God’s creation. To that end, the JCLC network – roughly 270 members strong, including several umbrella organizations such as the Union of Reform Judaism, United Synagogues of Conservative Judaism, the Jewish Federations of North America, and Hillel International – have committed to developing a Climate Action Plan. Temple Sinai, as a member of the JCLC, has developed this Climate Action Plan (CAP).

Our CAP’s goals are to (1) achieve organizational net zero CO₂ (“greenhouse gas”) emissions; and (2) engage with the broader Jewish community to achieve other sustainability goals. Our CAP represents an assessment of where we are as an organization and community and where we reasonably can aspire to be in the short and medium term. The CAP will propose goals for our community and provide new and exciting opportunities for our community to participate in doing what we can to preserve God’s creation, even if only in an incremental way. “You are not required to finish your work, yet neither are you permitted to desist from it.” (Pirkei Avot 2:1).

Led by Temple Sinai’s Green Team, our community presents the following CAP for all to consider and reflect up. The CAP recommends getting to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by (1) sourcing cleaner energy; (2) planning to replace non-electric appliance with electric appliances; (3) implementing efficiency retrofits and nature-based solutions; (4) adjusting food, travel, and procurement practices; (5) instituting composting and carpooling; and (6) to the extent necessary, offsetting unavoidable emissions by purchasing vetted and verified carbon offsets. Further, the CAP sets forth ways in which we as a community can add sustainability to our educational curriculum and even our celebrations. The CAP also addresses advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels and explores options regarding the choice of financial relationships that keep climate and sustainability goals in mind.

Proudly, Temple Sinai is not starting from scratch in this effort. This community is already well on its way to meet some of the goals described in this CAP. As you will see, there has been progress already in the areas of clean energy sourcing, reduction of emissions, food and food waste, and nature-based solutions. Green Team members tracked climate-related bills and shared information with the community during the 2023 Maryland and District of Columbia legislative sessions. But, there is more to be done.

We thank those who have already provided input on the CAP, and we look forward to working with everyone in our community to advance these important goals.

The Temple Sinai Green Team

I. SOURCING CLEAN ELECTRICITY & FUEL SWITCHING/SOURCING CLEAN ENERGY

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We installed a photovoltaic (PV) solar array.	X						
We installed another form of onsite renewable energy production.							X
We purchased clean electricity through the grid or other program, such as community solar.	X						
We rent and the building sourced 100% clean electricity.							X
We rent and advocated for the landlord to source clean electricity.							X
We educated our remote workforce about purchasing clean electricity for their home.							X

Discussion: Temple Sinai has solar panels through a purchase power agreement (PPA) with Generate C&I Solar Opportunity LLC. Expansion of solar panels, including on the roof of the new addition, is not possible because there is not enough space.

Temple Sinai has belonged to an electric coop, Community Purchasing Alliance (CPA), for the last 10-11 years. (<https://www.cpa.coop>). Through CPA, Temple Sinai procures its electricity from Constellation NewEnergy Inc. The Constellation agreement says “Your electricity purchase under this agreement includes NewMix® RECs equal to 100% of the Account(s) load volume during the term of the agreement. NewMix® RECs are Green-e® certified renewable energy certificates sourced from wind and/or solar renewable resources within the US. Does this mean that 100% of Temple Sinai’s electricity is from renewable sources (through a combination of solar from the panels and use of RECs)? Joe says “yes.” TS pays a premium for wind RECs.

Next steps:

Promote community solar programs to membership.

II. SOURCING CLEAN ELECTRICITY & FUEL SWITCHING/ GO ELECTRIC/FUEL SWITCHING

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We took an inventory of our equipment, noting which use fossil fuels, the year they'll reach end of functional use, and made a timeline to replace with electric versions.	X						
We electrified our appliances, equipment, and/or vehicles.			X				
We assessed our electrical capacity and know if/where we need upgrades.			X				
We upgraded the capacity of our electric panel(s).	X						
New construction/remodeling was all electric.	X						
We rent, and the building is all electric.							NA
We rent and advocated with our landlord to fuel switch.							NA
We educated our remote workforce about fuel switching.							NA

Discussion:

Discussion: Marta Goldsmith and Evan Seigel of the Building & Grounds Committee, and Adam Prill, TS owner's representative on the new addition, worked with Diego Enriquez, Facilities Manager, to do an inventory of the equipment in the existing building. Work in the new addition was performed in accordance with the Green Building Regulations as set forth by DCRA.

Next steps

- Obtain an energy audit for the entire building, including the new addition.
- Develop a timeline and budget for replacing gas appliances in the original building. Explore financing sources to cover equipment replacement costs.

III. FURTHER REDUCE EMISSIONS/MAKE ENERGY EFFICIENT RETROFITS

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We switched to LED bulbs			X				
We installed motion detectors for lighting (if observance allows)			X				
We installed and used programmable thermostats to optimize energy/comfort settings.			X				
We installed energy efficient appliances.			X				
We increased the useable power coming in through the electrical panel (known as power factor), reducing overall energy use.					X		
We improved the building envelope with insulation and/or energy efficient windows.			X				
We installed geothermal.						X	
We installed solar water heaters.						X	
We installed a white roof.					X		
We installed a green roof.						X	

Discussion: The 2023 capital budget allocated funds for replacing all LED lights, including parking lot and interior lighting in the existing building.

Work in the new addition was performed in accordance with the Green Building Regulations as set forth by DCRA. See [“Environmental Aspects of Construction Plan & Stormwater Retention.”](#)

- All systems were reviewed and approved as it relates to compliance by a 3rd party, Sustainable Building Partners.
- Lighting is energy efficient LED, much of which is automated with the use of day light harvesting and vacancy sensors.
- The addition has higher levels of exterior insulation as required by Greene Building Code.
- Material Selections – Most if not all finish selections (carpet, flooring, doors, ceiling tiles, millwork materials, etc.) were chosen from environmentally friendly and eco sensitive products.
- Paints and adhesives have no VOCs.
- Plumbing fixtures are low water usage as required by code.

Next steps

- Obtain an energy audit for the entire building, including the new addition.
- Ensure replacement of LED lights throughout the building and in the parking lot.
- Look into the possibility of a white roof and of increasing the power factor.

IV. FURTHER REDUCE EMISSIONS/TRANSPORTATION

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We installed signage to support clean modes of transportation.						X	
We give parking priority for electric cars, carpool, or biking.						X	
We provided instructions on our website and PR for how to get to our site/programs via public transit, carpool, biking, or electric vehicle.					X		
We implemented programs and incentives that encourage staff and members to commute via public transit, carpool, biking, or electric vehicle.						X	
We offer electric vehicle charging in our parking lot.					X		
Air travel to programs, events, conferences, and meetings was limited; and/or we did virtual engagement and/or bundled objectives when travel is needed.						X	

Discussion: As part of the building project, the parking lot is being reconfigured and a bicycle parking shed is being added. Green Team member Rabbi Melanie Aron has been in discussions with the heads of the Nursery and Religious Schools on how to encourage carpooling. f Cantor Robins is interested. Meet with the religious school and nursery school committee chairs in the fall.

Next steps

- Apply for funding through Adamah’s Climate Action Fund to support the installation of an EV charging station.
- Ask Joe at CPA about EV charging incentives.
- Determine how many could walk to school, and whether entrances are accessible, including stroller accessibility.

V. FURTHER REDUCE EMISSIONS/NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We assessed our facility's grounds to understand current land use.		X					
We planted additional trees on our property.			X				
We reduced lawn (thereby reducing mowing and increasing perennial coverage), by converting lawn to native plantings, rain gardens, and/or sustainable food gardens/farms.	X						
We manage our landscape, including lawns, without fossil-fuel powered equipment.					X		
We manage our landscape, including lawns, without using chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides.					X		
We converted impermeable surfaces to green infrastructure, such as bioswales, and green/white roofs.			X				
We restored degraded ecosystems on our property such as waterways, wetlands, and/or woodlots.			X				
We sequestered carbon through other nature-based technologies, such as biochar production or composting toilets.						X	

Discussion: As part of Temple Sinai's Renovation & Expansion plan, three sections of stormwater bio-retention are under construction. These bio-retention ponds will gather over 3,000 excess gallons of stormwater annually. They will filter the water through local plant life and other natural means before the water is released into the local watershed, including Broad Branch Creek, which feeds into Rock Creek and eventually the Potomac River and beyond. Additional piping will be added under the new parking lot that will feed into the retention pools and assist in meeting storm water management goals. Although the contribution to cleaner water flowing into the Chesapeake Bay is modest, these efforts exceed DC government standards.

A pollinator garden was developed on the Military Road entrance to the temple. After constructing a bed to soften the soil and limit weeds, the Temple Sinai Green Team planted several species flowering plants over the summer of 2023, and members continue to water and tend to the garden. Other planting plans are in place. Two new trees have already been planted. The woodland management strategy includes nineteen new deciduous trees, five new evergreen trees, 165 various shrubs, and 365 perennials.

Next steps:

- Maintain/expand the pollinator garden.
- Make signage to educate the community about the benefits of a pollinator garden and stormwater bio-retention ponds.
- Draft a board policy to require the planting of a new tree when an old tree is removed.

VI. FURTHER REDUCE EMISSIONS/FOOD

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We exclusively served vegan (plant-based) food.					X		
We exclusively served vegetarian (no meat or fish, but did serve dairy and/or eggs).					X		
We had vegan options at all meals.					X		
We had vegetarian options at all meals.					X		
We replaced industrial meat, dairy, and eggs with higher welfare, more regeneratively farmed versions.					X		
We have a food policy that addresses climate impacts.					X		
We advocated for more plant-based options with local caterers, our food distributor, and/or other outside food providers.					X		

Discussion: With resources provided by JCLC and the communities of practice gatherings, we are looking at examples of food policies and strategies for reducing GHGs through changes in the foods that are procured, prepared, and served in the Temple Sinai community, especially at temple events.

Next steps:

- Provide a meat “opt-in”, making vegetarian/vegan meal the default.
- Offer B’nai Mitzvah families a list of caterers that provide vegetarian/vegan options.

VII. FURTHER REDUCE EMISSIONS/FOOD WASTE

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We conducted a food waste audit.					X		
We have a food waste policy.					X		
We took steps to reduce food waste created on the catering/kitchen side (e.g., don't serve oversized portions, don't make/order way more than is needed, properly store ingredients and leftovers, use "zero waste cooking" techniques).					X		
We took steps to reduce food waste in the dining area (e.g., provide smaller plates, don't use trays, intention about the amount of food put out on buffets, have signage and/or teaching moments at meals).					X		
We gave surplus food to people (e.g., encouraged people to take home leftovers, donate surplus to food banks or shelters).					X		
We gave surplus food to animals (e.g., people feed to their backyard chickens, a local farm takes leftovers for their animals).						X	
We composted surplus food (on or off site).			X				

Discussion: The Green Team is working in partnership with Temple Sinai staff in charge of event planning, contracts for use of the social hall, and waste removal, as well as TSWRJ volunteers, including Carol Brand and Meg Seldin, who order supplies for the kiddush luncheons. Taking the lead in the Green Team's initiative to advance its composting goals is Robyn Miller-Tarnoff, past co-chair of the Green Team, who has developed a composting budget with a proposal from Compost Crew. TS WRJ Chair Sally Greenberg is working with the Green Team on implementation of the composting plan.

Further to the goal of effectuating composting solutions, the Temple Sinai Green Team has researched the efforts of and resources already identified by other congregations that have established composting facilities at their temples. Concrete steps that will advance our goals include (1) strategically placed 35-gallon composting bins through the temple; (2) daily removal of those bins into two 65-gallon outdoor bins; (3) a contract with Compost Crew to collect the 65-gallon bins weekly (aiming for Monday collection to capture waste generated over Shabbat); (4) development of display posters that will be placed adjacent to the 35-gallon bins indicating which items can be composted; (5) special training for Compost Crew staff to ensure it is sensitive to and aware of any specific limitations on composting in a Jewish house of worship; (6) an audit of the temples existing paper products for assessment of composability; (7) working with temple procurement to ensure that social hall rental contracts specify the use of compostable paper goods; (8) educating and empowering members of the congregation to adopt composting and other waste reduction strategies in their own homes; (9) recruiting volunteers to monitor the 35-gallon bins at temple events for the first month of adoption; and (10) enlisting Board officers and clergy to make the congregation aware of the new bins, including calling them out at services that precede events where food will be served.

Next steps:

- Finalize cost estimates and timeline for adoption of composting.
- Determine financial resources to cover a three-year pilot project.

VIII. CARBON OFFSETS FOR CARBON EMISSIONS THAT CANNOT BE ELIMINATED

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We categorized our GHG emissions.					X		
We measured our GHG emissions by category.					X		
We fully offset all GHG emissions					X		

Discussion:

Through the Davis Center newsletter, the Green Team has provided members with information on and links to websites on purchasing carbon offsets to reduce our carbon footprints of air travel.

Next steps:

IX. EXPANDING IMPACT/ EDUCATION AND NATURE CONNECTION

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
Programs: Produced programming for our staff and/or constituents about implementing climate action solutions in their homes and communities.				X			
Curricula/Ritual: Integrated opportunities for nature connection into our organizational culture, i.e. incorporating it into curricula or programming, life cycle events, volunteer events, etc.			X				
Training: Develop staff or community capacity to incorporate Jewish nature connection into our work by participating in trainings and programs with Adamah or JOFEE organizations.				X			
Publicity: Promoted and publicized our climate action work to your networks and community.			X				
Outreach: Encouraged organizations within our network to join the Coalition.				X			

Discussion: The green team held a program with the religious school, worked with other groups in the Davis Center to host the Zwerdling shabbaton on climate justice, and spoke at climate shabbat.

Next steps:

- Continue programming with services, speakers, activities, and formal education. We have the TuB'Shvat shabbat in January, where we will present the CAP, have a children's planting activity, and host a speaker on composting. We want to do more to share and promote the climate solutions already implemented at the synagogue.
- Meet with Rabbi Diamondstein to discuss youth engagement.
- Start a Kvutzot, local chapter, of the [Jewish Youth Climate Movement](#).

Additional Question: How many people total were impacted by the initiatives referred to above this year? The religious school program includes nature related education as part of the Tu Bishvat curriculum for all grades. Care for the Earth is taught in the religious school as one of the basic Jewish values. The kindergarten families use a booklet for Tu Bishvat entitled: Parent's Guide to Climate Revolution and the program partners with a nature center in Rockville. In addition the middle school offers an eight week elective which is totally focused on Jewish environmental issues and climate change. Cantor Rohdes is committed to providing education as part of the B-Mitzvah family program for "greening your simchah"

The preschool does not have a set curriculum but develops units based on student interests. They care deeply about the environment and see children as natural scientists, so there is always much discussion about how we take care of the world, what we wonder about plants and animals, and more. Many of our materials are natural, or "loose parts," and they teach the children to recycle (in some years recycling has become an extended investigation!).

X. EXPANDING IMPACT/ ADVOCACY

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We created a Jewish Youth Climate Movement kvutzah or an Adamah on Campus chapter.					X		
We hosted a Dayenu Circle.					X		
We partnered with the Jewish Earth Alliance or participated in their action events.					X		
We participated in demonstrations (e.g. rallies, marches, climate strikes, direct actions).					X		
We engaged climate concerned voters through postcard campaigns, hosting candidate forums, participating in “Get Out the Vote” work, etc.				X			
We published Op-Eds, letters to the editor, or other articles.				X			
We lobbied elected officials or regulatory agencies on climate policy.		X					
We communicated with our community about climate advocacy opportunities.		X					

Discussion:

Federal (ongoing), DC, MD and MoCo (when in session). Green Team members are tracking MD and DC proposed legislation and communicated calls to action to the Temple Sinai membership through the weekly newsletter and Davis Center website.

Next steps:

- Identify Green Team members to cover the 2024 Maryland and DC legislatures.
- Communicate action items through Green Team Google Group and the Davis Center Newsletter.

XI. EXPANDING IMPACT/ FINANCE

Activity	Completed	Continuous	In process	Planning to next year	Want to learn more	Not currently planning to	Not Applicable
We created a Jewish Youth Climate Movement kvutzah or an Adamah on Campus chapter.					X		
We hosted a Dayenu Circle.					X		
We partnered with the Jewish Earth Alliance or participated in their action events.					X		
We participated in demonstrations (e.g. rallies, marches, climate strikes, direct actions).					X		
We engaged climate concerned voters through postcard campaigns, hosting candidate forums, participating in “Get Out the Vote” work, etc.					X		
We published Op-Eds, letters to the editor, or other articles.						X	
We lobbied elected officials or regulatory agencies on climate policy.				X			
We communicated with our community about climate advocacy opportunities.		X					

Discussion: The Investment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee is interested in establishing a green screen or filter for the Temple’s investments.

Next steps:

- Follow up with the head of the Investment Subcommittee.

XII. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

Those in our society with less power and fewer resources, already more vulnerable, are hit hardest by the impact of climate change. Climate action planning is an opportunity to address such harms and inequities through the pursuit of a just transition, and ensure they are not recreated in the future. Like everything else in your climate action plan, incorporating climate justice is a process of learning and growth that develops year-over-year. Please use this space to share the principles, processes, and practices that your organization uses, or will use, to promote just outcomes through climate action. Revisit this question next year and consider how to improve the process. (Learn more about a just transition at [What is 'climate justice'? » Yale Climate Connections](#))

In February 2023, the Temple Sinai Green Team and the Davis Center co-hosted a program, "Environmental Injustice: What Is It and What Can We Do About It." The program's keynote speaker was Vernice Miller-Travis, Executive Vice President of the Metropolitan Group, and a nationally renowned thought leader on environmental justice and the interplay of civil rights and environmental policy. Jacob Fenston, WAMU Environment Reporter, moderated a panel discussion on examples of environmental injustice in the region, what is currently being done to address these matters, and what more we can do as a community. Panelists included Doug Weisburger, Senior Planning Specialist, Sustainability Programs, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Janet Phoenix, MD, MPH, from the Milken School of Public Health at George Washington University, Sharon Edwards, a longtime activist from the Brentwood area, and Alex Vazquez, CASA Lead Organizer for Montgomery County/

Temple Sinai Green Team member Mark Rose is a journalist whose reporting has covered environmental justice matters in low-income communities in Texas, Louisiana, and Washington, DC. Rose intends to track these issues in the Metro DC area and report on them to the Temple Sinai membership.