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November 12, 2019

Dear Members of Our Community

This is an update on Or Shalom's Housing Taskforce activities. In May, we wrote to you about the challenges that Or Shalom faces due to growth in membership and increased activities. We discussed two options: renovate our existing building or move to a new building.

In August, we recommended to the board to expand on our existing site and renovate where needed. The advantages of expanding on site include a location central to our membership, a well-loved sanctuary, and the ability to go forward without depending on whether we can find a better property on the market.

Expanding on site is a lengthy process that can be broken down into three phases: feasibility and schematic design, detailed design, and construction. The feasibility phase itself is lengthy and requires professional assistance because we are asking the city to approve a larger building footprint on the existing lot. The feasibility phase carries the risk that the city will not approve the expansion, either on its own terms or because of neighbourhood opposition.

The taskforce has three action items for the coming year. financial capacity. They are to: 1) determine Or Shalom's financial capacity for building expansion, 2) engage the community to more precisely assess Or Shalom's housing needs, and 3) to develop a schematic design with architectural advice.

This is just the beginning of a long process. People experienced in property development tell us that it will take some three years to develop a design, present it to the city and receive approval. In the end, the city may say no. To keep our options open, the taskforce will also be asking a real estate agent to let us know if properties come on the market.

Because of the lengthy time frame for this project, the Board has agreed to pursue interim measures to make our building as it is more usable. This includes providing flexible seating in the sanctuary by replacing a portion of the pews with comfortable chairs.

Please feel free to contact us with your questions and your suggestions.

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and Russil Wvong

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