Building Our Community

Strategic Plan for Ensuring the Future of the Calgary Jewish Community
When Jacob Diamond, the first Jewish settler, arrived in Calgary in 1889, there was no synagogue, no cemetery, no kosher food available – no Jewish community to greet him. Over time, as more brave pioneers put down roots here, the founders of our community built all the fundamental institutions of Jewish life. Because of their dedication, we are now blessed with four synagogues, two day schools, a mikveh, cemeteries, and agencies that cater to our social service, advocacy and recreational needs.

The first 100 plus years of Jewish life in Calgary was spent building the foundations of the vibrant community we have become. Now that we are established as a viable community, it is time to look to the future, to determine what kind of Jewish community we will leave as a legacy to generations to come.

The Jewish community of Calgary is at a crossroads. We have much to be proud of as a community, but we also have challenges to face. Affiliation rates and community participation are waning. Although Calgary is growing quickly, the Jewish community is not keeping pace. It is time to take significant action.

Determining the course of action is the purpose of the strategic planning process which has been ongoing for the past 18 months. During that time period, the Strategic Planning Committee spoke with many individuals and dozens of organizations where we explored the current strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for the success of our community. The entire Jewish community was invited to participate in this process and the input, ideas, and recommendations provided were considered in forming our strategic plan. We gained a broad understanding of the perspectives and dreams of the Calgary Jewish community that will lead us into a new era of dynamic community growth.

This overview serves as a synopsis of the Strategic Plan. It summarizes the goals, objectives, and key recommendations. The heart of the plan is AFFILIATION. Our community must provide opportunities that will enhance affiliation rates, help the unaffiliated become involved in the community, and increase the points of connection for those that are active.

There is much to be proud of in our community, but we are at a crossroads. Affiliation rates and the desirability of community participation are waning. Immediate action is required. This plan is designed to propel us in a new and different direction on a number of fronts and several important initiatives will require significant resources. Other modifications can be accomplished immediately with minimal effort. The plan is comprehensive and innovative and will serve as a roadmap for our future. As a living document it is imperative that all organizations, agencies, and community members consider its implications and collaborate on its implementation.

The Jewish community of Calgary is poised on the edge of a new period of growth. Like the generations before us, we must plan carefully and responsibly. But we also must dream and work together to achieve the next level of excellence in Jewish life.

Calgary Jewish Community Council

Gerry Barron
Chairman, Strategic Planning Committee

Nelson Halpern
President

Lance Davis
Executive Director

March 2007
The Strategic Planning Committee was struck by Calgary Jewish Community Council (CJCC) and given a mandate to enter into dialogue with the Calgary Jewish community and assess its needs and priorities as a whole, in order to develop a roadmap for building a healthy, vibrant and sustainable Jewish community in Calgary.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Strategic Planning Committee spent a great deal of time and effort asking questions and listening, in order to provide all organizations and other constituencies, groups and individuals in the community an opportunity to be heard.

The work was advanced in five phases:

- Research of existing information including census data, previous studies, surveys, and publications.
- Consultation with major Jewish agencies and organizations, through one-on-one meetings and surveys.
- Individual interviews with community members.
- Focus groups and town hall meetings.
- Analyzing data and developing a roadmap for the future.

The Strategic Planning Committee met with more than fourteen organizations and interviewed numerous individuals by way of interviews, focus groups and a town hall meeting. What emerged is that while the community has many strengths, it is at a crossroads. **We can either build a strong and vibrant community through increased affiliation or risk, at best, maintaining the status quo or, at worst, see a huge decline in involvement in the community.**

We believe that this plan if implemented will lead us down the road to a healthy, vibrant and sustainable Jewish community in Calgary. Its value rests in the community’s willingness to act on it. We urge all in the community to join in supporting the realization of the vision identified by the Strategic Planning Committee.

The Strategic Planning Committee would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Joel Shapiro for his hard work, professionalism, and dedication in leading us through the strategic planning process as the consultant to this project.

**Calgary Jewish Community Council Strategic Planning Committee**

Gerry Barron  
Steve Cohen  
Peter Cohos  
Myrna Linder  
Honourable Madame Justice Marina Paperny  
Mark Zivot  
Lance Davis, Executive Director, CJCC  
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The Plan

The essential elements of the Plan have been categorized according to the following Strategy Map.

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A. Major Projects and Initiatives

EXPAND THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF COMMUNAL IDENTIFICATION, AFFILIATION, AND PARTICIPATION

The Goal: Maximize Affiliation
Affiliation is the key to ensuring the continuity and vibrancy of the Jewish community and Jewish identity, affiliation, and participation are the heart of this plan.

The Objectives:
- Increase the number of people who are a part of the community.
- Increase the number of people who support Jewish causes.
- Enhance and enrich the opportunities to help people lead a meaningful Jewish life.

Recommendations:
- Offer relevant, interesting, diverse, educational, and high quality programming which:
  - Comprises targeted social and cultural programs through the Jewish Community Centre (JCC) in partnership with other organizations such as community Shabbat dinners, social action programs, and musical and dramatic productions.
  - Build on the success of existing initiatives; such as the early childcare program.
  - Is not always tied to fundraising.
- Establish a Volunteer Bank for all Jewish organizations.
- Be more inclusive and welcoming to the unaffiliated including inter-married families.
- Reduce barriers to participation in the community including developing an integrated subsidy system.
- Create multiple portals, entry and connection points, for people to become affiliated.

Practically all of the other issues and recommendations outlined in this plan are aimed at or will have the result of increasing identification, affiliation, and participation which is vital to our goal of building a healthy, vibrant, sustainable Jewish community in Calgary.
### The Goal: Promote and Enhance Jewish Learning and Education

Jewish learning and education is a cornerstone of Jewish identity and affiliation. It is a community issue that transcends all agencies and organizations.

### The Objectives:

- Provide quality, life-long Jewish learning and education opportunities.
- Strengthen our day schools.
- Ensure that Jewish education is viewed as a communal responsibility.

### Recommendations:

- Establish a Jewish Board of Learning and Education to ensure the quality and accessibility of Jewish education and learning in Calgary in a variety of forms and streams, explore broadening the delivery of services, facilitate cooperation and coordination between organizations and reduce duplication of services.
- Assess, with the stakeholders, the operational feasibility and complete a cost-benefit analysis of moving Calgary Jewish Academy and Akiva Academy to the campus lands to increase their competitiveness with other schools and maximizing efficiencies.
- Assist in marketing the day schools as highly desirable and competitive institutions.
- In conjunction with the schools, take steps to ensure the continuing financial sustainability of our day schools.
- Take steps to eliminate barriers to education, including expansion of available subsidies and implementation of strategies to reduce transportation barriers.
- Expand the early childhood education program and employ this program to engage families in Jewish education.
- Reestablish a series of credit courses for high school students and as enrolment grows, assess the viability of extending day school to grade twelve.
- Coordinate the delivery through the existing agencies and organizations in the city of a broad range of high quality, interesting, and relevant Jewish continuing education programs for all ages; including after-school programs, expansion of Sunday schools, adult education, and informal education programs.
The Goal: Engage Our Youth and Young Adults

Our youth and young adults are the lifeblood of the community. There is a need to ensure that our youth and young adults, both married and unmarried, become affiliated or continue their affiliation into adulthood.

The Objective:

• Foster a lifelong commitment to Judaism and the community.

Recommendations:

• Retain professional staff to develop, coordinate and integrate meaningful and engaging young adult programs, experiences and missions.
• Develop and coordinate multicultural, educational and leadership development and volunteer opportunities targeted at youth and young adults.
• Provide multiple opportunities for interaction of our youth and young adults.
• Actively engage intermarried couples and families in Jewish communal programs and events.
• Reduce financial barriers to participation.
• Implement inter-city programs.
• Welcome and integrate newcomers and reintegrate returning graduates.
The Goal: Grow the Community
In order to develop a more dynamic and diverse Jewish community, we need to grow the Jewish population base.

The Objective:
• Increase the number of affiliated Jews in the community which will enhance the vibrancy of the community through increased participation.

Recommendations:
• Increase affiliation rates in Calgary, firstly among the marginally affiliated and then the unaffiliated within the community. Secondly, recruit strategically across Canada and then internationally, but only after substantial internal improvements in our community that results in improved internal affiliation rates.
• Strike a committee to assess how to grow the community utilizing in particular the strong local economy.
The Goal:
Build a multi-faceted campus on the JCC property and adjoining community lands to house various Jewish institutions, which will provide the foundation for the future of the community.

The Objectives:
• Increase affiliation and participation.
• Provide quality spaces for our organizations and community members to congregate and connect.
• Maximize talent, resources and synergies within communal agencies and organizations;
• Provide care for our seniors.
• Enhance community pride.

Recommendations:
• The following should be considered and evaluated as part of the plan for the campus:
  ◦ An expanded and rejuvenated JCC, education centre (housing the day schools), nursing home, and theatre which are viewed as priorities by the community.
  ◦ Holocaust museum and resource centre, historical society museum, teen lounge, kosher dining/lounge areas, social hall, seniors lounge, child care centre, Jewish library, communal meeting rooms, and office space for Jewish organizations.
• Immediately appoint a planning and development committee with a mandate to build a plan for the campus development, considering the many community needs, priorities, opportunities, timing, space availability, costs, and community financial capacity.
• Strike a campus fundraising committee to create a comprehensive financial resource development plan which will include planned giving, endowments, corporate philanthropy, and government grants. This committee will focus upon raising the funds to build a sustainable Jewish community campus.
ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH FAMILIES

The Goal: Encourage the Development of Jewish Families
Meeting Jewish singles is difficult in Calgary and this is demonstrated by inter-marriage rates of 80% for those under 30 years of age. It is important to provide opportunities for this population to meet which is, in turn, important in growing the community and increasing affiliation. Intermarried families must be encouraged to be part of the community.

The Objectives:
- Jews who wish to find a Jewish spouse are able to do so without having to leave Calgary.
- Jews who choose to intermarry and their families are welcomed and integrated into the community.

Recommendations:
- Create opportunities for singles of all ages to meet through general and targeted programs and services.
- Implement inter-city programs and introduction services.
- Engage intermarried couples and families in the community.
The Goal: Enhance Community Communication
A strong communication program is essential to building and bringing the community together.

The Objectives:
- Increase coordination between agencies.
- Increase utilization of internal communication as tool for enhancing affiliation and participation.
- Increase transparency.
- Increase access to information about Jewish Calgary to the community and increase community dialogue on issues.

Recommendations:
- Improve inter-agency communication between professionals and leadership of local agencies and organizations through regular meetings.
- Communicate with philanthropic leadership more regularly with quarterly mailings, regular email correspondence, and meetings when required.
- Develop a Jewish information service – a point of contact for getting community information from knowledgeable people.
- Increase CJCC leadership visibility in the Jewish and general community.
- Review community publications and consider coordination of publications of various agencies in both printed and electronic format.
- Utilize technology in communication strategy, including maintaining an effective community website and use of email and other electronic driven means of communication.
IMPROVE CJCC GOVERNANCE

The Goal: Improved Organizational Governance
Calgary’s Jewish community requires effective governance in order to provide visionary leadership and implement sound strategies.

The Objectives:
- Development of a governance model that promotes strategic and long term thinking, yet is responsive to short-term community needs.
- Planning and fundraising strategies that are interdependent.
- Passionate and dedicated leadership.
- Transparency and accountability to the community.

Recommendations:
- Change to a Federation style model.
- Review UJA fund allocation process with a view to building community unity, ensuring accountability and monitoring outcomes.
- Clarify and coordinate the roles, relationships, and mandates of the CJCC, the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary, and the JCC to capitalize on strengths and develop more collaborative relationships.
- Create a new forum for the professional and volunteer leaders of the various agencies, communal organizations and other stakeholders to participate in planning and coordination.
The Goal: Improved Teamwork Between Agencies
To enhance and fill service gaps by ensuring that programming by the various community agencies and organizations is coordinated and complementary.

The Objectives:
- Improved program and service delivery to the community.
- Coordinated programs by all organizations and agencies.

Recommendations:
- In conjunction with improving CJCC governance, the CJCC must convene a new forum for professional and lay leaders of various agencies and organizations to participate in the planning and coordination of community programming and services.
- New or expanded programs must be developed on a consultative basis with relevant organizations. For example, expanding childcare programming is the shared responsibility of the JCC, Jewish Family Services Calgary, the day schools and CJCC.
CULTIVATE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The Goal: Cultivate Community Leadership
Leadership development and progression is vital to the sustainability of the community.

The Objectives:
- Broaden our leadership base and provide for succession planning.
- Make leadership roles coveted and recognized.

Recommendations:
- Develop a targeted leadership recruitment effort which includes outreach to youth, young adults, various sub-communities within the greater Jewish community, and leaders at various stages in their volunteer lives.
- In coordination with other agencies and organizations implement a leadership training program for all organizations which addresses the need for succession planning, placement and sustainability.
BECOME MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE

The Goal: Creating a Community that is Both Welcoming and Inclusive
The key to increasing affiliation and growing the community is to be welcoming and inclusive.

The Objective:
• Ensure that the Calgary Jewish community is warm, welcoming and inclusive.

Recommendations:
• Develop a strategy for identifying new-comers as well as the unaffiliated and implement targeted outreach and welcoming programs including establishing and maintaining protocols for initial contact and follow-up.
• Develop strategies for welcoming participants at all events.
• Establish a volunteer bank for all Jewish agencies and organizations.
• Identify and reduce tangible and intangible barriers to participation.
• Recruit mentors and contact people for newcomers.
• Ensure that leadership development opportunities are accessible to all.
ACHIEVE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Goal: Achieve Financial Sustainability
Financial sustainability of all agencies, programs, and facilities is critical to the continuity of the community. Increasing enrollment, membership, grants, government funding and community fundraising will ensure that the agencies which provide direct service to the community can thrive.

The Objectives:
- Increase grants and donations.
- Broaden donor base.
- Endow donations, programs, and operating costs.
- Grow the annual UJA campaign.

Recommendations:
- In conjunction with improving CJCC governance, clarify and coordinate the roles, relationships, and mandates of the CJCC and Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary.
- Educate the community about funding needs locally, nationally, in Israel, and world-wide.
- Improve communications with donors.
- Increase UJA support of partner agencies thereby reducing their need to fundraise independently.
- Develop a long term plan to maximize the annual UJA campaign and to obtain endowments for the future utilizing the necessary professional resources.
C. Long-Term and Continuing Obligations

SUPPORT OUR SENIORS

The Goal: Enhance Support for Our Seniors
We are grateful to our seniors for building Jewish Calgary and recognize that they have much to offer our community. It is incumbent upon the community to acknowledge their unique needs and to address them.

The Objectives:
- Elimination of social isolation of seniors.
- Ensure the wellness of seniors through specialized programs.

Recommendations:
- Expand, in coordination with other agencies, Jewish social and wellness programs for seniors.
- Ensure adequate, coordinated professional staffing is available to support seniors’ programming.
- Expand kosher meal programs.
- Ensure that transportation to community events and programs is available for seniors.
- Provide subsidies where required.
- Increase recruitment of seniors as volunteers.
- Convene a committee to assess the feasibility of building seniors’ facilities on the Campus, including a Jewish nursing home and/or assisted living units. Empower this committee to work with the Calgary Health Region to develop this project.
**The Goal: Enable Jewish Life in Calgary**
As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that basic, fundamental practices essential to Jewish life are available which, in turn, is vital to growing the community.

**The Objectives:**
- All basic components of leading a Jewish life are available in Calgary; kosher food, kashrut supervision, Jewish burial, services to the vulnerable, a variety of synagogues and a mikvah for all community members.
- Adequate and appropriate security measures are in place at all Jewish institutions.

**Recommendations:**
- Establish a Religious Life Committee to include synagogue leadership and relevant agencies and organizations to monitor and ensure the first objective is met.
- Continually upgrade security and emergency response plans together with other agencies and organizations and continue strong relations with the Calgary Police on security matters.
- Work with Calgary Kosher to ensure availability of kosher food.
- Support the efforts of our synagogues and jointly program with them.
The Goal: Reduce Financial Barriers to Community Involvement
Poverty exists in our community and we have an obligation to ensure that a lack of financial resources is not an obstacle to living a Jewish life and participating in the Jewish community.

The Objectives:
In conjunction with Jewish Family Services Calgary:
- Ensure the cost of Jewish life does not preclude members of our community from affiliating.
- Expanded financial assistance.
- Challenges facing the poor such as housing and job training are addressed promptly.

Recommendations:
- Implement the strategies recommended by the Poverty Committee of the CJCC including:
  - Subsidize the cost of participation in the Jewish community for those without sufficient financial resources.
  - Implement a centralized subsidy system for all Jewish organizations.
  - Publish a blue book of Jewish resources.
  - Develop a housing plan working in partnership with local landlords.
ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

The Goal: Enhancement of Community Relations and Support for Israel
Our community needs to play a leadership role in Calgary and Alberta in interfaith and ethno-cultural relations including advocating for Israel and fighting anti-Semitism.

The Objectives:
- The CJCC provides a respected voice for the Calgary Jewish community and serves as its ambassador.
- Enhanced relationships with the numerous ethno-cultural, religious, and political organizations in the city and province.
- Growth in understanding and support in Calgary for Israel.

Recommendations:
- Advocate for human rights and battle against racism in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and worldwide.
- Expand educational initiatives about Israel and the Holocaust in the Jewish and general community such as the Holocaust Symposium with Mount Royal College and the Asper Program for junior high school students.
- Send numerous missions to Israel for the Jewish and general community.
- Build strong relationships with other communities on shared concerns.
- Coordinate communication among all agencies and organizations to ensure that the community speaks with one voice while reflecting the various perspectives within our community.
- Utilize the resources of national and international organizations including the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy.
JEWISH CULTURE AND ISRAEL IDENTIFICATION

The Goal: A Rich and Vibrant Jewish Culture in Calgary and Enhancement of Our Community’s Connection to Israel
Engaging our community in Jewish culture will help to increase levels of affiliation thereby contributing to the vitality and continuity of our community. A strong Israel identity contributes to a strong Jewish identity, therefore we must enrich the symbiotic relationship between Calgary and Israel.

The Objectives:
• The flourishing of different components of Jewish cultural life.
• The general community shares in our culture.
• The relationship between Calgary and Israel is cultivated, nurtured, and strengthened.

Recommendations:
• Coordinate cultural programs to avoid gaps and maximize our synergies. For example, provide assistance to the Jewish Film Festival and the Jewish Book Fair to enhance their programming.
• Provide the resources to the appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure there are sophisticated and engaging educational programs with respect to Jewish culture.
• Analyze the feasibility of building a theatre on the Campus to house an expanded cultural program.
• Invest in programs and projects that will deepen the ties between Jewish Calgarians and Israel.
A Vision of Our Success

The year is 2015. The latest census data shows a significant increase in the Jewish population of Calgary. A tally of organization and synagogue memberships, school and camp enrolments and attendance at events indicates that over 65% of Calgary’s Jews participate and feel connected to the community on multiple levels. A comprehensive campus on the JCC lands, housing an expanded and rejuvenated JCC, schools, seniors’ residences and cultural centre, is a focal point for a re-energized and unified community. Children, adults, seniors – all age groups – enjoy a range of programs and activities in state-of-the-art recreational, educational and cultural facilities. Jewish day schools are operating at full capacity with 700 students enjoying top quality education. With multiple streams to meet the diverse needs and wants of students and parents, and new state-of-the-art buildings, the Jewish day schools are highly competitive with the numerous private schools in the Calgary region. After school Jewish education for those students not attending day school is thriving. Young families are supported with an expanded day care which feeds into the schools and JCC programs complement neighbouring school programs. Adult Jewish education programs have continued to grow in popularity.

Camps are running at capacity and have had to add cabins. Youth group attendance is at its highest levels with dedicated teen space at the JCC. Attracted by our healthy economy, a high percentage of university graduates return and settle in Calgary. A welcoming community offering a combination of Western hospitality and all the Jewish programs and services found in larger Jewish centres attracts increasing numbers of Jews from other Canadian cities.

A revitalized governance structure ensures cooperation between organizations, maximization of services and seamless programatic initiatives. A variety of social, cultural, recreational, educational and religious programs offer diverse pathways to connectedness – and this increased connectedness leads to further involvement and commitment.

The JCC is a state-of-the-art facility whose members view it as comparable and even superior to the city operated leisure centers and private clubs. A restaurant and lounge provide high quality kosher food service to the community and comfortable and inviting gathering places. Seniors have the opportunity to live in a Jewish environment either in subsidized apartments, assisted-living units or a nursing home on the campus. Opportunities for intergenerational interaction make the Calgary campus a “haimish” place to be. With programs offered at synagogues as well as the JCC’s theatre, Holocaust Resource Centre, library, and Historical Museum, a transportation service allows for seniors, adults and kids to participate in all that is available to them.

With the population reaching a critical mass, Jewish singles find an abundance of opportunities for interaction and social connection within the community. Intermarried families are welcomed into the community. Teenagers and young adults feel at home in the extended family of the Calgary Jewish community.
Services and assistance to the poor and vulnerable are a priority. Jews of all socio-economic levels are integrated into the community and its programs. Maintaining the dignity of those requiring assistance and maximizing communal participation are the central tenants of a centralized subsidy program.

Positions of leadership in communal organizations are highly sought after and volunteers are afforded meaningful leadership training.

The Jewish community reaches out and responds to the general community and numerous ethnic and other religious communities to build strong relationships that foster understanding and goodwill and assist those in need. The community continues to advocate for human rights, domestic Jewish issues and Israel within the general community.

Support for Israel amongst the Jewish community is elevated to all time highs. There are substantive and meaningful partnerships with Israelis living in our partnership region in the Eztbah HaGalil.

A larger, more engaged community is able to raise the funds required to assist Jews in need, fund significant subsidies, reduce financial barriers to participating in the community, properly fund Jewish programming including new program initiatives, support regular missions to Israel for community members of all ages, continually educate the public and the Community regarding the Holocaust, continue to support social programs in Israel and provide programming and services for all demographic groups in our community from preschoolers to seniors. The annual UJA campaign has doubled in size. We have substantial endowments which ensure that physical facilities do not become an operating burden. With this solid financial foundation, the community is able to sustain itself, to implement new, creative and innovative programs, and to continue the legacy of donors and volunteers who built and advanced the community.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?
Conclusion

This document is a summary of our full report and we urge you to read it in its entirety. It can be found on the Calgary Jewish Community Council website – www.jewishcalgary.org or you can obtain a copy at the JCC.

The most critical topics, priorities, objectives, and recommendations are included in this report. This strategic plan is multi-dimensional in nature and is intended to be comprehensive in addressing the needs of the community. The recommendations are interdependent so it is critical to view the plan as an integrated whole. It serves as a call to action as the Strategic Planning Committee of the Calgary Jewish Community Council envisioned that our research would provide the framework for an implementation plan that would be embraced by the entire community. We hope that individual Jews, leading philanthropists, communal organizations, and partner agencies will join the Calgary Jewish Community Council and rally around this plan in order to take our community to new heights. This is but the first step. On-going monitoring of our progress and regular updates is a must.

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Please send all feedback to Lance Davis, CJCC Executive Director, 403-444-3151 or ldavis@cjcc.ca.

Thank You,

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Calgary Jewish Community Council’s Strategic Planning Committee
Strategic Plan
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