

A BLUEGRASS JEWISH COMMUNITY STRATEGY

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Presented to
A Town Hall Meeting
of the Jewish community of central Kentucky



June 15, 2016

Outline

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- About the Strategic Study
- About the General Community
- About the Jewish Community
- Strategic Assets & Liabilities
- Community Strategy
- Long Term “Big Ideas”
- Implementation: Next Steps

About the Strategic Study

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- Purpose: to determine the best way to develop the Jewish community of the Bluegrass
- Launched in: September, 2015
- Commissioned by: the Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass
- Oversight by: the Presidents Council – the leaders of central Kentucky’s Federation, congregations and Jewish organizations.
- With support from the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence in Louisville
- Consultant: Ukeles Associates, Inc.
- Consulting Team: Dr. Jacob B. Ukeles, Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz

About the Strategic Study: Research Process

- Reviewed material about the community's history and data -- membership, programs, services, finances and facilities of congregations and organizations.
- Interviewed a sample of 30 community leaders
- Conducted an internet survey of the needs and interests of 910 individuals. 423 responded – an extraordinary 46% overall response rate – 374 answered all or most questions, an equally impressive 41% completion rate

About the General Community

The general community provides the economic base and cultural context for the Jewish community

Forbes Profile of Lexington, Ky

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- “The "Horse Capital of the World" in the center of Kentucky is also a college town (University of Kentucky, Transylvania University) ... The average high temperature is 65 degrees, the low, 46 degrees...Air quality is good. Lexington has a sufficient number of doctors per capita as well as a high rank on the Milken Institute list of best cities for successful aging. The economy is solid.”

Lexington is considered a good place to live

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Lexington was named:

- The 4th best city for "Businesses and Careers" in 2011 by [Forbes](#) magazine
- The 5th best city for Young Professionals in 2008
- The 6th Best Value Cities 2011 by [Kiplinger](#).
- Lexington is the 61st largest city in the United States, but ranks tenth among US cities in college education rate.

“Lexington is a great place to raise a family”*

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- Southern (charm), but relatively open and diverse
- Insular, but friendly
- Capital of beautiful horse country
- A real city, lots of culture, highbrow and lowbrow
- Good interfaith climate, Jews feel at ease

**Drawn from key informant interviews*

Jewish Community

The Jewish community is small, with two relatively strong congregations, an established Federation and a long history

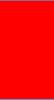
There are probably between 1,900 and 3,800 Jewish people in central Kentucky, less than 1% of the total population

- Based on survey
 - 900 Listed Jewish adults (known)
 - 360 Jewish children (estimated)
 - 1,260 in known Jewish households
- If 2/3 are known, than 1,900 Jewish people
- If 1/3 are known, than 3,800 Jewish people

The Jews of the Bluegrass: Demography

- Age
- Marital Status (76% married or living with a partner)
- Children

The median age of Jewish respondents -- 59 -- is only slightly higher than the median age of the Jewish population of neighboring Cincinnati.

Response	Chart	Percent	Number
18-29		4%	13
30-39		14%	51
40-49		14%	48
50-59		19%	68
60-69		28%	98
70-79		14%	49
80-89		6%	23
90+		1%	4
Total Responses			354

Most Jewish households do not include any children

	Percent	Number
None	71%	223
One child	11%	35
Two children	12%	38
Three or Four Children	5%	16

The number of children is evenly distributed by age

Age	Percent	Number
0 – 5	34%	60
6 – 13	42%	74
14 – 17	24%	43
Total	100%	177

The Geography of the Bluegrass

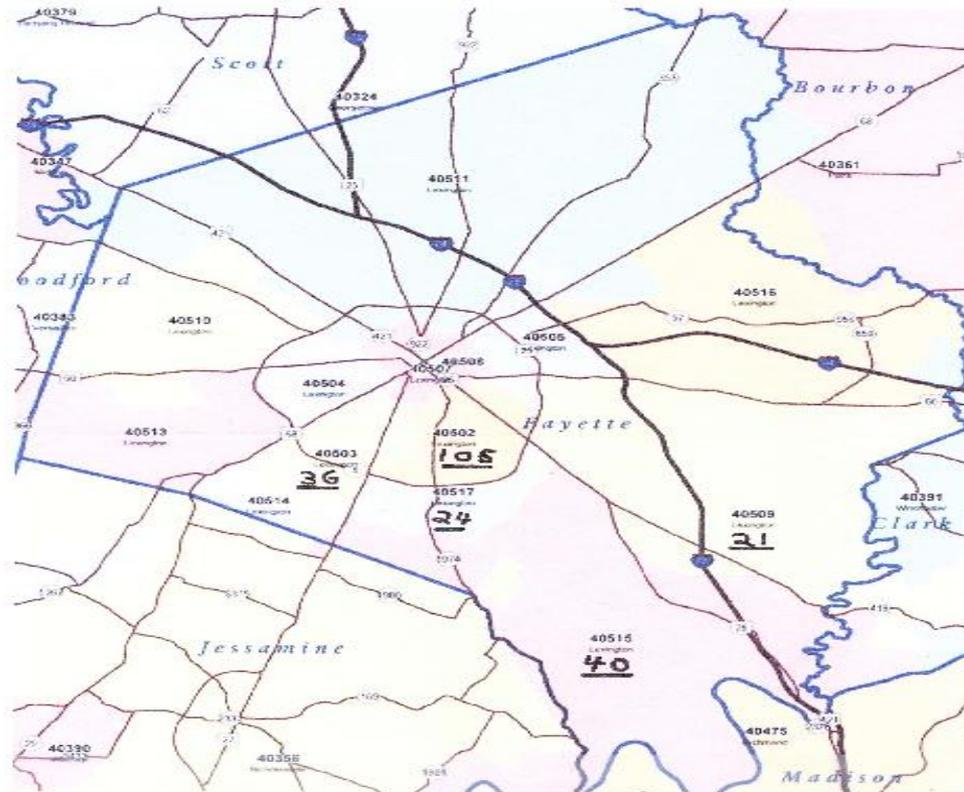
A decorative horizontal bar consisting of a dark blue segment on the left and a lighter blue segment on the right, spanning the width of the slide.

The Jewish population is spread out among 37 zip codes, but 2/3 live in the top 5

Zip Code	Percentage	Count
40502	32%	105
40515	12%	40
40503	11%	36
40517	7%	24
40509	6%	21
All Others	32%	106
Total	100%	332

Most Jews live in the center or southeast quadrant of Lexington

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Lexington/Fayette County, KY & Environs, Zip Codes & Five Zip Codes with Largest Jewish Populations

The Jews of the Bluegrass: Social and Economic Characteristics

- Income
- Education
- Length of Kentucky residence
- Relationship with the University of Kentucky

36% of the respondents report annual income of over \$150,000.

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Under \$25,000		7%	18
25,000 to \$49,999		13%	34
\$50,000 to \$99,999		27%	72
\$100,000 to \$149,999		17%	45
Over \$150,000		36%	94

Two of three Jewish respondents have more than a Bachelor's degree – the very highest level in the USA

Response	Chart	Percent	Number
Doctoral Level (e.g. MD, Ph.D.)		29%	87
Law Degree		4%	13
Masters or Some Graduate Training		32%	95
Bachelors Degree		24%	72
Associates Degree/ Some College		9%	27
High School Diploma Tech. School Cert.		2%	7
No High School		0%	1

More respondents have come to Kentucky in the last ten years than were born here

Response	Chart	Percent age	Count
2 years or less		4%	12
3 to 5 years		7%	22
6 - 10 years		11%	34
11 - 20 years		13%	39
20+ years		48%	145
I was born in Kentucky		17%	50

43% of respondents have a relationship with the University of Kentucky

Response	Chart	Percent	Number
Yes, current student		2%	5
Yes, current faculty or research position		13%	40
Yes, current admin. or staff		4%	11
(Other, e.g., retired faculty member:)		24%	73
No relationship to U. of Kentucky		57%	169

The Jews of the Bluegrass: Jewish Identity

- Importance of being Jewish
- Religious denomination
- Jewish education

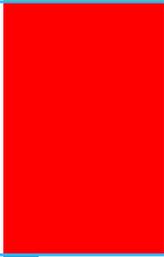
Three out of five respondents report that being Jewish is “very important in my current life”

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Not important		8%	29
Somewhat important		31%	113
Very important		61%	223

The vast majority of respondents identify with a religious denomination of Judaism – typically Reform or Conservative

Response	Percent
Yes, Reform	44%
Yes, Conservative	34%
Yes, Other	10%
Jewish by religion, no denomination	7%
Jewish, no religion	4%
Not Jewish	2%

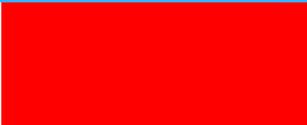
Most respondents had some Jewish education before age 14, typically Sunday School or Hebrew School

Response	Chart	Percentage
Sunday or other once a week school		33%
Hebrew School or other multi-day part-time Jewish school		30%
Full-Time Jewish Day School or Yeshiva		5%
Other		9%
None		23%

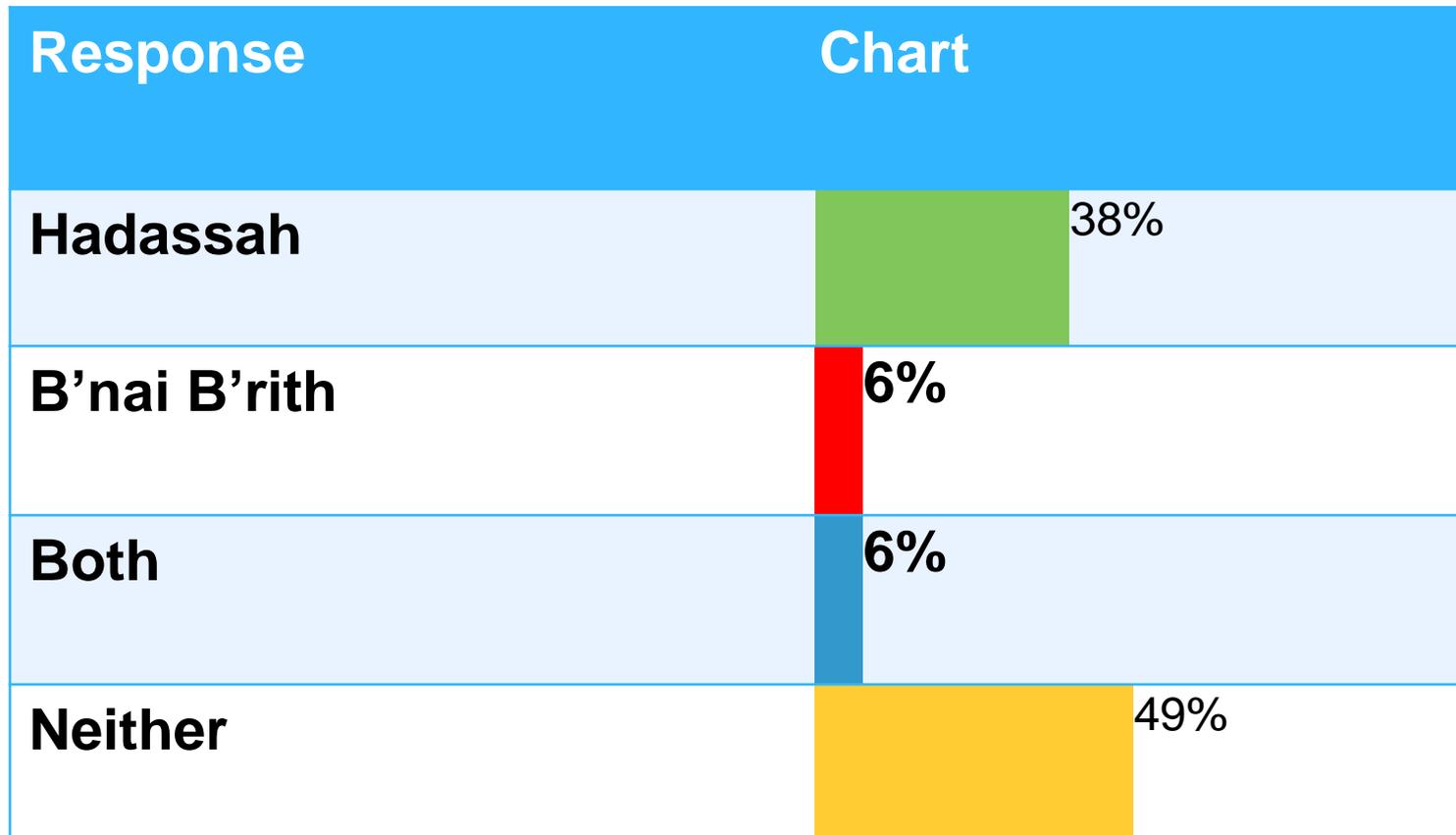
The Jews of the Bluegrass: Jewish participation

- Belonging to a congregation
- Belonging to Hadassah
- Volunteering
- Charitable contributions

Most respondents belong to a congregation, most often TAI or OZS (a few belong to more than one)

Response	Chart
Ohavay Zion Synagogue	 43%
Temple Adath Israel	 48%
Lexington Havurah	 6%
A congregation outside of Central Kentucky	 4%
Other	 3%
No congregation	 12%

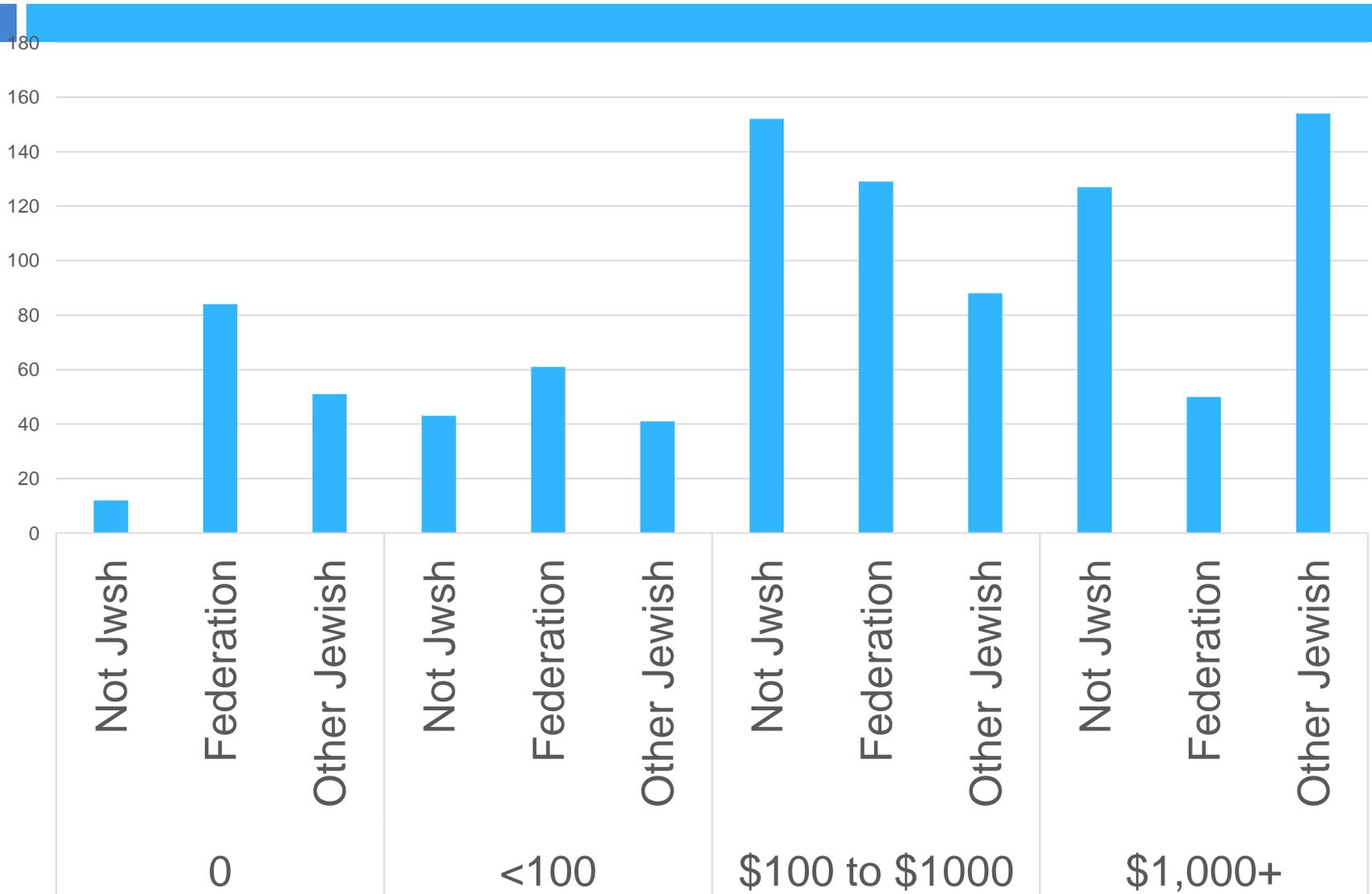
44% of respondents belong to Hadassah; 60% of women respondents belong



60% of respondents engage in volunteer activities
– equally distributed among Jewish, not Jewish
and both

Response	Percentage
Yes, only in a Jewish congregation, organization or the Federation	23%
Yes, only in an organization that is not specifically Jewish	19%
Both	19%
No	39%
Total Responses	374

□ Respondents give less to Federation than to other causes



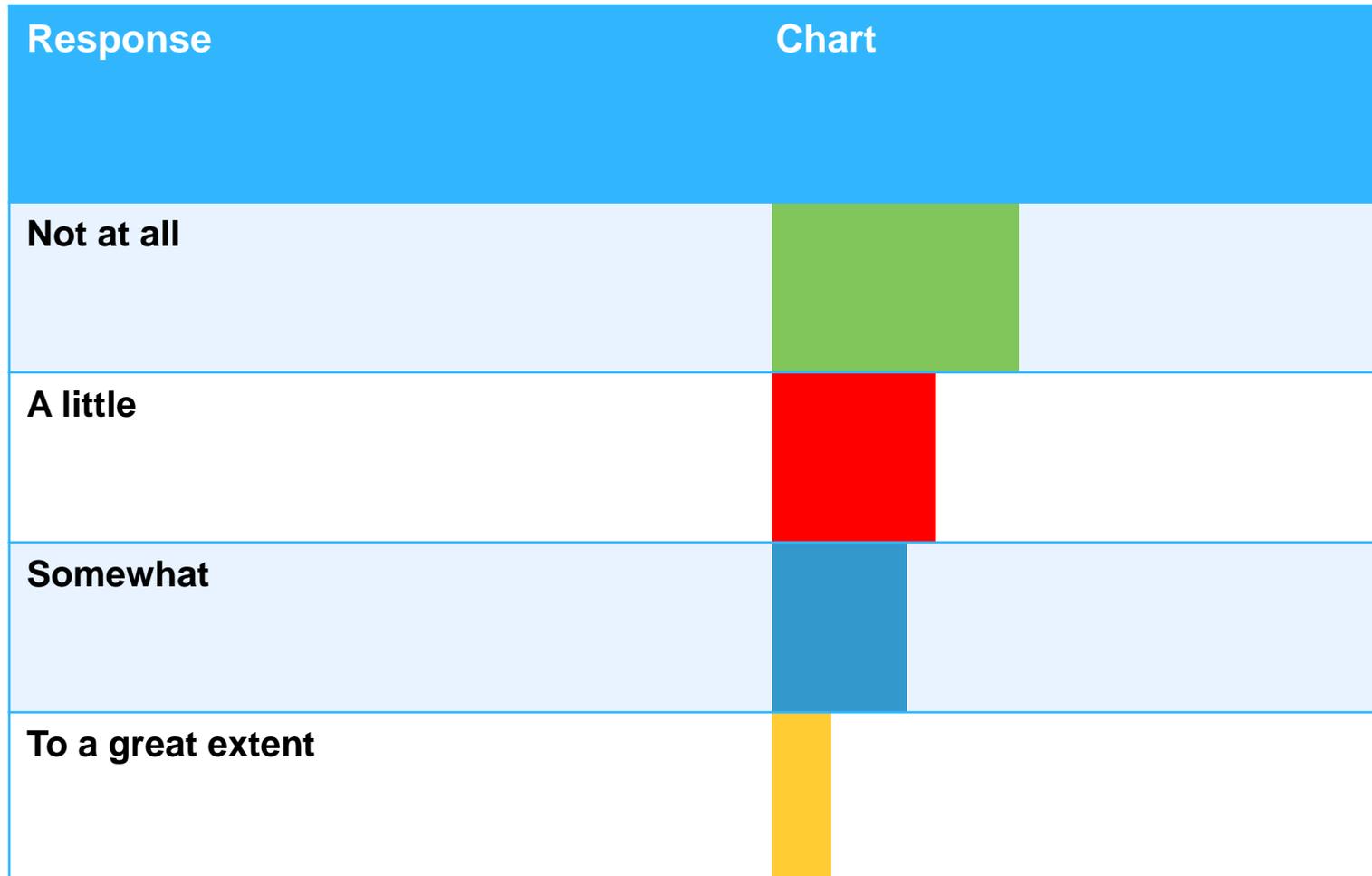
Needs and Interests



What three things would you like to see happen in Central Kentucky to make participation in the Jewish community more meaningful for you & your family?

- 468 responses
- **Most frequent response: greater integration & collaboration between congregations and among organizations in community, more community-wide activity (87 responses)**

To what extent is price a barrier for you when it comes to participating in a Jewish program or activity?



Strategic Liabilities & Strategic Assets

Strategic Liabilities

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- Scale -- the community is too small to sustain:
 - duplicate programs for children
 - targeted programs for small cohorts, e.g. young Jewish adults (there were only 30 respondents to the survey between the ages of 18 and 39 without children)
 - full-scale Jewish infrastructure, e.g. day school or full-service JCC
- Aging donor base & leadership – that is not being replaced
- Historic distance between the congregations and between congregations and Federation
- Gaps in Jewish infrastructure makes it hard to attract the most engaged Jewish families – day school, mikvah, kosher food

Strategic Assets

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- ❑ Relatively stable, highly committed, highly educated, relatively affluent Jewish population.
- ❑ Sustainable congregations and Jewish organizations with rich traditions and member loyalty.
- ❑ Lexington itself: Economy relatively strong, city is livable and affordable.
- ❑ University of Kentucky – leading employer, strong Jewish Studies program, cooperative administration.

Strategic Assets –cont'd

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- ❑ Potential for bringing community together
 - ❑ Institution-bridging vehicle in place: Council of Presidents.
 - ❑ Model of cross-congregation cooperation: Spinoza Society.
 - ❑ New spirit of cooperation – reinforced by rabbinic and Federation leadership.
 - ❑ Small scale makes it feasible to work together.

Community Strategy

- Working Assumptions
- Vision Statement
- Strategic Directions
- Recommendations

Working Assumptions

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- The Jewish population of the Bluegrass appears to be stable.
- While most young people who grow up here apparently move away, some return and others move in.
- About 20% of survey respondents came within the last ten years.
- Jewish population is unlikely to increase in the future, but the community is unlikely to disappear or even seriously decline in numbers.

Community Vision Statement

A stable, open, pluralistic, engaged and integrated Jewish community, rooted in the rich history of the central Kentucky Jewish community and the culture of the Bluegrass.

Strategic Directions: Making the Vision a Reality

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- ▣ Sustain the Jewish Community
- ▣ Integrate the Jewish Community
- ▣ Engage the Community in Jewish Life

Recommendations

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- Sustain the community
 1. Secure the financial future of the organized Jewish community with a legacy and endowment campaign
 2. Promote the Bluegrass Jewish Community

Recommendations (cont'd)

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- Bring the community together
 3. Integrate programs for children and youth across the community.
 4. Coordinate Jewish social, educational and cultural opportunities for adults of all ages.
 5. Create a communal structure for Federation, TAI, OZS and other organizations to work together.

Recommendations (cont'd)

- Create partnerships to better engage the community in Jewish life.

- 6. Develop a life-long Jewish learning program with UK's Jewish Studies Program.

- 7. Strengthen the relationship with the University of Kentucky.

1. Secure financial future of the organized Jewish community with a joint legacy & endowment campaign.

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- With 40% of the major donors to Federation and the congregations 70 or over, a **professionally-led, joint** legacy and endowment campaign is urgent.
- A legacy campaign is needed because most people in most communities do not leave anything in their wills for any charity on their own.
- A professional consultant is needed because legacy and endowment fund-raising is a specialty requiring specific skills and knowledge.
- The consultant will work with both congregations and the Federation to develop legacies and endowments for all three organizations, as well as gifts for coordinated community projects and programs.

2. Promote the Bluegrass Jewish Community

- The community should make a modest investment in promoting itself to potential new Jewish residents.
- The goal of this effort is not to recruit newcomers who have never heard of Lexington but to ensure that Jews with strong Jewish values and interests who are considering opportunities here know that quality Jewish life exists.
- In consultation with the Mayor's Office, the Chamber of Commerce and UK, the Jewish community should develop a strategy to: market Jewish Lexington.
- This could involve messaging to newcomers on the website, a brochure about Jewish Lexington distributed by the Chamber and used by brokers and others in touch with prospective residents.

3. Integrate programs for children and youth across the community

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- Ohavay Zion Synagogue Temple Adath Israel and the Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass should consolidate all formal and informal education and social programming for children and youth.
- This consolidation should include the OZS and TAI religious schools, Gan Shalom (OZS) and TAI pre-schools, youth programs of both congregations, Camp Shalom and PJ Library.
- Consolidation will help reach critical mass, which in turn will cut cost and improve educational quality.
- A position of director of Jewish learning and experience for children and youth should be established to oversee this consolidation and to direct the entire program.

3. Integrate programs for children & youth (cont'd)

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- The transition to a completely new model of programming for children will require a careful phase-in.
 - Phase I: consolidate each of the three duplicative congregation programs – preschool, religious school and youth programs
 - Phase II: formal and informal educational experiences would be integrated into three age-specific clusters.
 - Young children: preschool, PJ library, Mommy and me, Tot Shabbat
 - Children: religious school, after-school activities, Camp Shalom, referral to overnight camp
 - Youth: youth programs, Shabbat & holiday programs, social action

4. Coordinate Jewish social and cultural opportunities for adults of all ages

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- The community, should establish a community-wide “JCC without walls,” consisting of all programming sponsored by any Jewish organization or congregation.
- All programs, services and events provided by any of the constituent organizations or congregations should be part of an annual joint planning process culminating in an annual Bluegrass JCC Program, updated each quarter.
- With limited staff resources in Federation and the two congregations, it is important that there be good coordination and a clear division of labor among providers.

5. Create a communal structure for Federation, congregations and others to work together.

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- The organized Jewish community has an historic opportunity to create a community wide structure which will maintain the integrity and independence of existing institutions and organizations but enable the community to function in a unified manner.
- The key to a unified structure is a series of joint committees of the congregations, Federation and other organizations. For example:
 - A joint committee to oversee the endowment and legacy campaign
 - A joint committee to oversee the educational and experiential program for children and youth

5. Create a communal structure (Cont'd)

- There is at least one historic example of such a cross-congregation committee. The Spinoza Society – the committee that oversees Jewish burial, composed of representatives of both congregations – has been functioning for decades. The Spinoza Society is a model that can and should be replicated in other areas of Jewish life.
- The Presidents Council should serve as the overall umbrella for overseeing this structure. The Council is a precious communal asset. Most Jewish communities do not have anything similar.
- The Executive Director of the Federation and the two Rabbis should function as an informal secretariat of the Council.

6. Develop a life-long Jewish learning program with UK's Jewish Studies Program

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- The community should institute a program of regularly scheduled, high-quality courses. The community should seek to develop this program in partnership with UK's highly regarded Jewish Studies Program. 35% of respondents said that they would like to have access to Jewish Studies classes at UK.
- In the community survey, adult Jewish learning is one of the areas cited for more programming. The Jewish population has an extraordinarily high level of education. This suggests that there are people whose primary interest in Jewish activity is intellectual rather than religious or organizational.

6. Life-long Jewish learning program (cont'd)

- The exact nature of the partnership with UK would need to be explored with the leadership of the Jewish Studies Department and the University administration.
- The community should appoint a director of Jewish life-long learning. It is possible that this position could be shared with the UK Jewish Studies Department.

7. Strengthen the relationship with the UK

- The Presidents Council should establish a formal liaison to the office of the President of the UK and ask the President to appoint a formal liaison to the Jewish community. There should be a regular meeting between the two.
- Student recruitment is an example of an issue of common concern where the community could be helpful to the University.

Long-Term “Big Ideas”

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In the course of this planning process several intriguing “big ideas” surfaced:

- A physical center for the community housing both congregations and other community functions
- A Kehilla structure formally integrating all the congregations and organizations into a single entity
- Community membership whereby people would join the community rather than join a particular congregation.

Implementation: Next Steps

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- Following tonight's town hall meeting, the final report will be submitted to, and hopefully accepted by, the Presidents Council.
- This is an ambitious program and I believe it will attract the funding to implement key elements of the strategy.
- Central Kentucky not only can flourish as a Jewish community, it can serve as a model for other smaller Jewish communities in the USA.