

**ACCESS COMMITTEE REPORT, 2004**

**Developed and Prepared**

**By**

**The Access Committee**

**Of**

**Temple Sinai**

**Temple Sinai Board of Directors' Resolution, May 19, 2004**

The Board approves Section I of the Access Committee Report and directs its implementation by appropriate committees and staff. The Board directs the Access Committee to work in collaboration with the Building, Finance, and Facilities Committees to develop a multi-year plan and process for implementation of Section II of the Report, taking into consideration the construction of a new building as well as financial feasibility. The Board directs the Facilities Committee to consider the Access Report's recommendations in planning new facilities. The Board should make a good faith effort to do as much as possible as quickly as possible.

## **Introduction**

“First a person should put his house together, then his town, then the world.”  
Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883)

Shalom,

In 2003, the Temple embraced Lech Lecha, the long range plan which was the product of years of work. Lech Lecha recognizes that efforts must be made to make our congregation a comfortable and welcoming place for all. It also establishes as a goal of the congregation making Temple Sinai's facilities more accessible for all members of our community. With those principles in mind, the Access Committee was formed, so that barriers to full access to the Temple could first be identified and then remedied. With this report, the Access Committee sets out a variety of issues which must be addressed to make the Temple more accessible. Although this report goes into many details, the Access Committee considers this only a beginning of an ongoing effort to make the Temple accessible for all congregants.

Access is a complex issue which people don't tend to think about unless it becomes a necessity. Requests for access are sometimes misinterpreted or not fully understood by people who are not familiar with the difficulties surrounding access issues. It helps to all be on the same page (or in this case, the same few pages). This report not only explains and clarifies issues that the Access Committee has identified as barriers which hinder or prevent full involvement in the Temple Sinai community by individuals with access concerns, but also offers ideas and suggestions on how staff and leadership can begin to work toward resolving these concerns.

The report consists of two main sections. The first focuses on access issues in regards to creating a more sensitive environment to insure that all individuals who have specific access concerns feel welcome and able to participate in the various Temple activities. Most of these changes require little or no expense. The first section also includes topics and issues requiring consideration for further and future discussion.

The second section sets out to prioritize the committee's list of structural improvements and acquisitions of equipment and services necessary to 1) bring the Temple up to current building code standards, and 2) make the Temple community as accessible as possible. Those things listed in the second section will require financial expenditures and will need further discussion and examination by appropriate decision-making bodies of Temple Sinai, in order to reach feasible, timely, and effective solutions.

By adopting the proposals set out in this report, the Board, the clergy, the Temple staff, and all other leaders of the Temple may take concrete steps toward making the Temple a more accessible place. If the same leaders encourage the entire Temple community to use the Access Committee as a valuable resource, the community can begin thinking about the issues relating to access in a more inclusive way.

Temple Sinai Access Committee

# Access Committee Report

## Section 1

### Increasing Community Sensitivity

**1. Language “dos and don’ts”:** Spoken and written words play a significant role in conveying acceptance and respect. The following provides general guidelines on word usage in reference to people with disabilities:<sup>1</sup>

#### **DOS:**

Use the words “people,” “person,” “individual” (i.e. “people with disabilities,” “person having mobility issues,” “individual with access concerns”).

At congregational gatherings, instruct people to “rise” rather than “stand.”

When publicizing events through articles, email, or flyers indicate access availability by using such phrases as: “wheelchair accessible,” “assistive listening devices available,” “material available in large print,” “sign language interpreter available upon prior request,” “refrain from wearing chemically scented products.”

#### **DON’TS**

Avoid euphemisms like “physically challenged” and “differently-abled.”

Avoid using terms as “confined to a wheelchair,” “wheelchair bound,” “crippled,” “deaf and dumb.”

#### **2. Access accommodations for religious services:**

Unlock ramped entrance when services are held in Sanctuary.

Place large print prayer books<sup>2</sup> and, when available, copies of services and Torah portions, as well as large print song books and handout sheets, at ramped entrance and Chapel vestibule. Make sure that ushers know that this material is available and where it is located.

Post signs at both entrances to Sanctuary and Chapel informing that hearing devices and large print materials, etc., are available and how they can be obtained.

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<sup>1</sup> Remember people having disabilities are a diverse group. Some identify as “disabled,” or “handicapped,” or “people with special needs,” etc. If the question comes up in individual conversation, a good rule of thumb is to ask what term the individual prefers to use.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that most of the large print prayer books do not have copies of the “MiShebeirach” on either inside cover.

Make all books and print material electronically available in formats such as accessible PDF, WORD, or Kindle using at least a Times New Roman 12-point font.

**3. Oneg Logistics and Set-up:** In a big community, it may be hard for people to ask for assistance they need to get refreshments at the Oneg, or to be escorted to their cars afterward. At the point in services that announcements are made, it should be announced that assistance will be available to those who need it. That announcement should also identify people who will be providing assistance for that service. A uniform adoption of such a practice would exemplify that Temple Sinai is a warm, caring and inclusive community.

When services are held in the Chapel, it's difficult for some people to walk the distance to Stern Hall for the Oneg, and then to also walk back to their cars, which might be parked on Summit Street. At the present, people should be told that whatever assistance is needed will be provided, including assisting people to their cars. Perhaps, too, there can be exploration on moving the Oneg location to be in closer proximity when services are held in the Chapel.

The set-up of a few round tables with chairs has already made the Oneg more access-friendly.

**4. Meetings and Events:** Community consciousness has to be raised in regard to access to meeting locations and event planning. Although it's nice to have gatherings in homes to discuss Temple business and to participate in Temple-related activities and chavurot, people with access concerns may be inadvertently excluded. To promote sensitivity to the issue, perhaps, staff and committee's chairs can designate an office employee and committee member, respectively, to be in charge of access concerns to be available as a point person to answer questions on accessibility of meetings and events, and help resolve access issues should they arise, even if the solution includes the flexibility to relocate a meeting or event. It's often easier to make a call when you can ask for a specific person. Event and activity notices should include access information and the point person's name and phone number or email, as well as stating, "Please let us know if you need specific access accommodations."

If events are held in the Sanctuary or Stern Hall—where refreshments are often served—event planners should always consider and provide for access to the Webster Street ramped entrance and access to the lift. For those who are responsible for setting up refreshments, please add straws to the list of items to put out (and where in the kitchen they can be located).

**5. Access from the Sanctuary to Stern Hall:** There are serious problems related to access from the main sanctuary to Stern Hall, some of which relate to the stairs and some of which relate to the lift. One of the

stair's risers is 9 inches high and, more generally, heights of the various risers differ. Both of these factors make using the stairs very difficult for people who have trouble walking or climbing stairs. The committee understands that if the stairs were being built today, both the 9 inch riser and the differing heights of various risers would not comply with today's building codes.

There are numerous problems with the lift. Given the acquisition of the new property and the anticipated new construction/remodeling, the lift should be replaced with an entirely different means of going to and from Stern Hall. For now, however, the committee notes the following problems with the lift. Currently, the lift generally remains locked and can be used only after calling for assistance from a Temple staff member or a few congregants who are familiar with the lift. The committee has considered the idea of providing lift keys to those congregants who regularly use the lift. That would solve one problem, but would not address others. The lift does not always work correctly. There has been at least one occasion when a congregant was unable to exit the lift and was effectively trapped within the lift. The lift door, at the Stern Hall level, is on a timer and opens automatically. If the lift malfunctions, at that level, it's difficult for even a very strong person to open the lift to enable a person to exit. Beyond that problem, there is concern about the adequacy of the sensors which are designed to stop the lift if something obstructs the lift while in operation (in much the same way an electric garage door stops if the garage door comes in contact with something while moving). Though the lift has sensors, when "tests" were made (i.e., putting a hand under the lift on its way down), the lift did not always stop. Still a different problem is that the lift always stops between the level of the main sanctuary and the level of Stern Hall. While this stop makes it possible for a person to get off at the level of the bimah, that stop cannot be overridden (when no one wants to get off at the bimah level). The committee believes that this situation not only delays getting to Stern Hall; it also may present dangers to a person in the lift. In any event, the committee understands that if the lift were being installed today, it would not meet current building codes.

In any event, for as long as the lift remains, lift keys could be given to a greater number of people and other designated individuals can be trained in lift safety and operation. There also needs to be more training to promote attitudinal sensitivity with regard to people requesting to use the lift who may not appear disabled but have hidden disabilities or health conditions.

**6. Priority Use of Accessible Bathroom Stalls:** Post signs on accessible bathroom stalls asking that priority be given to persons who need accessible accommodations.

**7. Materials, Services, Equipment:**

- a. While large print and lightweight reading materials and assistive listening devices are already in the process of being made available, our community future provisions need to be

considered in regard to offering accommodations to people who read Braille and to people who require sign language interpreters. There is an untapped potential to increase Temple membership by reaching out to people in the Deaf and blind communities. For example, only two synagogues in the East Bay offer sign language interpreting—Kehillah, in Berkeley, and Temple Beth Torah, in Fremont (one Shabbat a month). Not having such interpreters limits worship options for many Jews and their families who use sign language. The Jewish Deaf Congress and the Jewish Braille Institute have websites which can provide resource information on available service and outreach to these communities.

- b.** The Temple building is a large physical structure (and will be expanding). As mentioned previously it can be difficult for some people to walk long distances. The purchase of a manual wheelchair (estimated to cost about \$800) to keep on Temple Sinai's premises would offer people another solution to logistical concerns.
- c.** Modifications still need to be made in regard to heavy doors to classrooms and some bathroom to make them easier to open. Heavy doors must also be checked on a periodic basis as part of an ongoing maintenance. Additionally, trash cans often block bathrooms and/or stall entrances to accessible bathroom stalls. This practice cannot continue.
- d.** Barriers and impediments to Temple elevators must be eliminated. Currently, elevators are sometimes used for "temporary storage" or blocked by trash bags or the audio/visual cart (particularly in the multi-purpose room where the elevator to Stern Hall is located). Often adequate access to the elevator to the Chapel is obstructed by a standing bridge table. Whenever access to the elevators is blocked -- either because the elevators are being used for storage or because access to the elevators is impeded --there is effectively no access at all to the areas served by the elevators.
- e.** Items for additional discussion: 1. Investing in an adjustable podium would benefit those called up to the bimah who use wheelchairs, or those short in height, as well as many seventh grade b'nai mitzvot students. 2. Exploring with other congregations the possible conversion of the interfaith community van to accommodate passengers who use motorized or manual wheelchairs and have difficulty transferring into regular van seats. The conversion would require installation of a lift or ramp, and tie-down mechanisms to keep the wheelchair secure while en route.

- f. Ensure the website stays in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines can be found at <http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php>

**8. Protocol:** Respect the dignity and wishes of any person to whom assistance is offered. Let people know that assistance is available and specify where it is available, rather than imposing help.

Communicating with someone with a significant speech disability can be challenging, at first, for a number of reasons, including unfamiliarity with that person's speech, apprehension about one's own ability to understand, and background noise. Conversely, someone with a speech disability may also be tense about having an initial conversation which can also affect the clarity of one's speech. Whatever the reason, it is important to remember that all people need to be treated with respect. The best policy is to ask someone to repeat something you didn't understand, rather than pretend otherwise, just as you would do when talking to someone with a pronounced accent. (Chances are the person will know when you didn't catch what was said the first time!) It's also easier to understand the person when you're both at the same eye level and, when possible, away from loud noise. You'll find yourself becoming more relaxed and comfortable talking to someone who has a speech disability the more frequently you have a conversation.

**9. Environmental Issues:** Quite a number of people at our Temple are affected by environmental illness. They have adverse sensitivities to chemically treated products such as cleaning materials, perfumes, and felt tip markers. For the benefit and welfare of congregants, children and staff, only environmentally safe products should be used. With regard to felt tip markers in particular, if it is felt that their complete elimination is not practicable, an alternative solution would be to keep a portable chalk board and chalk available which can be used upon request for individuals with environmental sensitivities.

**10. Access Committee as a main resource at the decision-making level:** As touched on in this report, there are many variables that impact accessibility—it's not just the physicality of getting in the door, but also the levels of participation and degrees of acceptance. It's more than the ability to attend services; it's being able to participate in events like Mitzvah Day, Mah Jong, Adult Choir, etc. We've already seen that the Access Committee has played a significant role in connection with developing plans for the new property by providing the Facilities Committee with important access information. Architects and community building specialists may have knowledge of current accessibility codes and standards but may not be aware of the practical nature of access—for example, the placement of the two disabled parking places on Webster Street doesn't allow for space for a van with a rear lift access. It is imperative, if Temple Sinai is committed to the philosophy of inclusion for all, that the Access Committee become included in the making of decisions for setting policy and hiring staff.

We have also developed the Access Issue Form (see Appendix i) to enable congregants to voice their concerns regarding issues of access. It's our intention to have this form available on the website and in the Temple office so that a process is established to identify access concerns and work toward resolutions.

## **Section 2**

### **Facilities Improvements**

We would also like to acknowledge that while this list points out many deficiencies in the Temple's facilities, it was also clear from the tour that the Temple Administration has already made strong inroads into making the facilities more accessible, and we thank them for their efforts.

The survey was generally restricted to review of wheelchair accessibility and minimum ADA standards. Not generally assessed were other population needs (for example special needs for the hearing or sight impaired, seniors, environmentally sensitive, semi-ambulatory, etc.)

The goals of this survey were as follows:

1. To identify deficiencies of the Temple facilities from the minimum ADA standards for access.
2. To attempt to prioritize the correction of these deficiencies by importance.
3. To identify corrective action, which should or could be deferred until the new building plan solidifies. (Some areas could be efficiently corrected / resolved in the remodel).
4. To assist the Architects / Temple efforts in identifying important areas for remodel.
5. To provide some rough estimates of magnitude of corrective costs.

This survey was not a complete or comprehensive survey. Due to lack of time many areas were not reviewed. These include:

- A) Kitchen and Oneg area (including exit) – We expect these would be fully renovated in the new building plan, and currently are far from meeting accessibility requirements.
- B) Stairs / Entrance from Webster to Stern Hall.
- C) Ramp / Entrance from Webster to Lift Area (though we have previously recommended an automatic door opener here).
- D) Front Exterior of Sanctuary.
- E) Classrooms and related areas / exits, etc.
- F) Offices and related areas / exits.
- G) Courtyard and Parking Lots.
- H) Balcony and Adjacent Rooms.
- I) Stairs to Stern Hall from Religious School.

J) Rabbi's Office (a big problem which we expect to be solved in remodel).

The following are general standards, which should be incorporated throughout the facilities.

1. All doors with self-closing devices need to be checked and serviced on a monthly basis to maintain less than 5# pressure (interior doors) to pull open (8.5# for exterior doors).
2. All handrails must be no more than 1-1/2" away from adjacent wall. Handrails must extend 12" beyond the last tread at the top of stair and 12" + 1 tread at the bottom of the stair. Handrails must be a round or rectangular shape at least 1-1/4" in size, but not bigger than 1-1/2".
3. Pathways, Corridors and Exits must be kept clear of obstacles such as trash cans, shop step stools, stored items, etc.
4. Accessories (soap dispenser, towel dispenser) in the bathrooms must be no higher than 40" above the floor, door and stall handles must be lever or slide type easily operated, drain traps beneath sinks must be insulated for safety against burns.
5. Wherever possible, utilize ramps or elevators, not lifts due to their difficulty to use.
6. Low coat hooks added on all bathroom stall doors.

**Priority Notes:** Priority by No's 1 - 5 with #1 being the highest priority. Note "D" = likely defer for remodel. Number 1 Priority is recommended for immediate correction, Number 2 recommended correction within the next year, Number 3 recommend doing with remodel and Number 4 within next five (5) years. Please note that the costs listed are rough estimates.

Priority	Summit Street Entrance	Rough Cost of Improvement
5	1. Does the ramp has a 2% or less cross slope? (Otherwise is dangerous for falls and wheelchair access) It might be a little more than 2%. All agreed. This would be a low priority item to correct.	
1	2. We need an automatic door at the entrance.	\$2,500
3	3. Stairway to second floor - handrail is the wrong size and needs extensions at top and bottom. Handrails are regulated in size and extension to prevent falls and injuries.	\$2,000

	<b>Chapel</b>	
1	1. Reviewed removal of a pew near the door for accommodating wheelchairs and / or folding chairs. This would be relatively simple and inexpensive. Will need to move the donation plaque to another pew.	TBD
3D	2. Reviewed options for a ramp or lift to the Bimah. a) Install lift (ramp is preferred). b) Remove a pew at the exterior wall in front. Add ramp and a handrail. There is not enough room to get proper-sloped ramp, but it would still be an improvement. c) Buy a portable ramp for use at center aisle. Margie suggested "Prairie View Ramp Co."	\$8,000 \$4,000  \$1,500
	<b>Women's Bathroom at Pre School</b>	
2	1. Should have signage alongside door to meet ADA requirements.	\$ 200
2	2. Accessible stall doors should have handles on both sides. (In all bathrooms – easier to close).	\$ 100
2	3. Lavatories should have wrist levers on faucet, for easy use.	\$ 200
2	4. Suggested fold-down purse shelf in accessible stall.	\$ 200
2	5. Suggested higher seat in at least one stall.	\$ 100
2	6. Suggested grab bars in all stalls. (Some stalls may be too small for this).	\$1,000
2	7. Suggested having stall doors swing opposite way.	\$ 200
2	8. Door pull pressures should be checked and adjusted once a month.	Maintenance
2	9. Trash cans restrict access (this is a typical issue in many of the bathrooms).	Maintenance
2	10. Need to insulate below sink plumbing trap.	\$ 50
	<b>Ramp at Preschool from Office Area</b>	<b>Rough Cost of Improvement</b>

3D / 5	1. Slope should be 1" rise in 12", but is 1" in 8".	<b>Not Cost Feasible</b>
2	2. Should be no greater than 1-1/2" between handrail and wall. Measures 1-3/4", similar at ramp to multipurpose	\$1,000
	<b>Men's Room at Childcare</b>	
2	1. For functions after hours – move children's stools and free standing mirrors to allow access.	Maintenance
2	2. Waste can blocks accessibility.	Maintenance
2	3. Need 12" clear at push side of latch (not a priority).	N/A
	<b>Multi-purpose Room</b>	
2	1. Doors to classroom entrance and fire door too hard to open.	Maintenance
2	2. Need to clear hallway / fire exit way of stored materials.	Maintenance
2	3. At elevator entry, garbage can and counter top block clear accessibility.	Maintenance
	<b>Stern Hall Men's Bathroom</b>	
2	1. Accessories (soap dispenser, towel dispenser) need to be lowered to 40".	\$ 100
2	2. Insulation needed around lavatory drain pipe.	\$ 50
4	3. "Accessible" stall is 4' - 7" wide, should be 5' - 0".	N/A
2	4. Need new handle on door.	\$ 50
2	5. Rear grab bar too high.	\$ 50
	<b>Stern Hall Women's Room</b>	
2	1. Accessories (towel dispenser) need to be lowered to 40"	\$ 100
2	2. Trash cans blocks entrance.	Maintenance
2	3. Entry door too heavy (5# maximum)	Maintenance
4	4. Need 12" clearance on latch side of door.	\$ 400
2	5. One soap dispenser blocks paper towel dispenser	\$ 50
	6. Faucet handles are a good example of appropriate type.	N/A
2	7. Door should open in at stall.	\$ 200
2	8. Door knob at stall should be lever or slide for ease of use.	\$ 50
2	9. Grab bar behind toilet should be at 36" above	\$ 100

	floor for best use.	
	<b>Fire Exit Stair at Multipurpose to Stern</b>	
2	1. Handrail incorrect size and needs extension	\$ 100
2	at bottom.	\$ 100
	2. Needs second handrail on opposite side.	
	<b>Access between Stern Hall and the Sanctuary</b>	
1	1. Stair risers are too high and vary in heights. They need to conform to building codes.	\$2,000
1	2. Relocate Podium now stored at Lift Landing.	Maintenance
1	3. Handrails are too far from wall and need extensions top and bottom.	\$ 500
2	4. The lift itself has been reviewed previously and recommended at minimum adding a new lower door for safety and to allow usage by the public. (Committee recommends eventual removal of lift / use ramp or elevator)	\$4000 (TBD)
	<b>Sanctuary</b>	
2	1. Reviewed ramp to Bimah. Best location is left Aisle (when facing the Bimah). Would involve removal of a few short corner pews. (In conjunction with extending the Bimah)	TBD
1	2. There should be eight (8) accessible seating areas calculated as a function of the occupancy allowed in the Sanctuary. These would be located in pairs at four (4) locations (two front, two rears). Margie can provide required clear area and other requirements for our review.	\$ 4,000
2	3. Briefly discussed revising Ark cabinet for accessibility.	TBD
1	4. Automatic door for Webster Street entrance.	\$ 2,500
	<b>Sanctuary Men's Bathroom</b>	
2	1. Insulate trap / piping below sink to avoid	\$ 50

2	burns. 2. Larger pull handles needed on stalls.	\$ 100
<b>Women's Bathroom</b>		
1	1. Door too heavy to pull.	Maintenance
2	2. TP holder protrudes into accessible area and is too far away.	\$ 100
2	3. Larger pull handles needed on stalls.	\$ 50
2	4. Insulate trap / piping below sink.	\$ 50
<b>Entries to Sanctuary</b>		
3	1. Ramp at Main Sanctuary Entrance (cost could vary greatly)	TBD
1	2. Awning for Webster Street entrance (cost could vary greatly). (For now use a temporary canvas awning until remodel / new building is completed)	TBD

"Each person would be seen as vital—whatever his "special needs" were, whatever circumstances made her seem unique—each would be held in equally high regard."

From **A GLORIOUS VISION THEN AND NOW**

Lisa Izes on *Parashat Bo*

