

JCC focus group March 14, 2014

Over view

This was a group of long-term Edmontonians who all have families here, some multi-generational. Several moved to Edmonton in the 80s and 90s and have been involved in various Jewish organizations.

There was very little divergence in the POV of the participants.

Discussion Results

There was unanimous agreement of the necessity for the Community to have a centralized JCC facility. For the group, the original intent of the Rio Terrace location of the JCC is still important. In the case of the younger generation of Jewish teens and 20 and 30 year olds, they are currently missing the opportunity to have a centralized, multi-facility building where they can meet, do various activities especially physical activities.

Some discussion was held around the concept of using different Jewish facilities for different things as well as the possibility of the community renting facilities for activities from the general Edmonton area. This was seen as a short term solution not a long term solution for a community that hopes to have a future.

There was consensus around the idea that today's generation inherited facilities and property from the pioneer generations and have benefited greatly. The current Talmud Torah would not have been possible if there wasn't a Talmud Torah in Glenora that could be sold to use as a down payment toward the new one. The same holds true for the Beth Israel Synagogue. Today's Jewish Community must give the same asset to a future generation. There was strong consensus that it is our duty to provide a facility and an asset to that upcoming generation.

For this group, the Talmud Torah location is the best possible choice for a JCC building extension. Of all the Jewish facilities in the City, TT is the one that has the most regular daily activity with close to 180 children from daycare to Grade 9 attending. Parents and Grandparents are at the school on a daily basis as well. The JCC can benefit from the Gymnasium which is critical to a new JCC. There is the library and multipurpose room as well as some classrooms. The attendees were all past presidents of the TT Society and the Parents Auxiliary and all of them knew restrictions imposed by the EPSB however they all knew that solutions could be worked out. The TT facility has been used by the general community for sport and has also been used for summer day camps. Clearly, a co-operative agreement can be reached.

The new JCC building that would be attached or adjacent to the TT should include a kosher kitchen, meeting rooms and possible fitness capability. Parking can be accommodated without a structure by replacing the Tot lot playground and moving that activity to the inside area or the park area.

It was the feeling of the group that the \$4.8 Million should be used to build as much of a building structure as possible. There are available grants from varying levels of government for a community building such as this one which would enable more choices.

The community, especially the younger community is in the West End and hence it makes sense to make the new JCC convenient to this audience.

Discussion was also held about programming and providing funds to build offices in other venues such as the Beit Horim building now under construction. This was seen to be a poor use of the funds. Programming could come under other budgets, in many cases under self funding options. Building offices in a seniors facilities also seems to be scattering the central opportunity of a JCC.

The Edmonton Jewish community has both an obligation and an opportunity to invest the \$4.8 million wisely and benefit future generations. Dispersing the funds is not a wise choice. Leaving the community without a central building is also not a wise choice. This group was staunchly in favour of building as much as is possible now and planning to add to the building as more funds and needs arose in the future.