

Frequently Asked Questions about possible co-location with First Universalist

Updated July 2019

Below is a list of the questions contained in this FAQ, with internal hyperlinks. You can also just scroll the document to read all the questions and answers. The answers represent our best thinking and knowledge at this time. They are subject to change as we get deeper into our discernment process.

The Basics

[What is Co-Location?](#)

[What does it mean to be “leaning in”?](#)

[How do the members and leadership at 1st U view co-location?](#)

How and Why Did the Board Decide to Lean In?

[How did the ST Board arrive at choosing co-location vs remodeling 1360 Minnehaha Parkway?](#)

[What makes co-location a terrific idea?](#)

[I know there have been updates from leadership about what’s going on, but I can’t find them. Where are they?](#)

[In what ways is ST exploring the questions and concerns around co-location?](#)

[Has this decision to co-locate with 1st U already been made?](#)

[How will this final decision be made? A congregational decision? A board decision?](#)

[Is there a specific date by which we need to decide whether to co-locate or not?](#)

[To what extent is this decision based on the close friendship between our Rabbis and First U’s clergy?](#)

How Will This Actually Work?

Will there be additional/new spaces at 3400 Dupont?

Will co-location mean that our sanctuary will be on the 3rd floor; that we'd be "Jews in the attic?"

Will both ST and 1st U have access to all spaces at 3400 Dupont?

What would ST's worship space be like at 3400 Dupont? Would we/could we use their sanctuary?

What would be the impact of co-location on our Jewish cultural and spiritual identity?

Is having our own building vital to the identity of our congregation?

Will 1st U still refer to the building as a church? Will we be able to call it a synagogue?

What about the kitchen? How will we decide who gets to use it when? Will 1st U have pork and shellfish in the building?

Will 1st U be our landlord?

When would we actually co-locate?

How Will Co-location Impact Our Families?

Will religious school continue on Sundays or will it be moved to Saturdays?

Will my kids have to see Christmas trees and decorations around when they come to services in December?

What If???

Is there a fail-safe to our decision to co-locate should we reach irreconcilable differences?

What happens if in 5 years ST or 1st U needs more space?

What if holidays other than Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fall on Sunday or on one of 1st U's holidays? And would we be able to use

[the building on Christian holidays \(e.g. Christmas Eve movie night\)](#)

How Will Co-location Impact Shir Tikvah Financially?

[Are we leaning in to co-location because we can't afford anything better?](#)

[How will the money work? What is the cost or cost savings of co-location?](#)

[Will my annual dues/giving be going towards the 1st U building/congregation?](#)

[Will there be shared staff?](#)

THE BASICS

What is Co-Location?

Co-location literally means that Shir Tikvah and First Universalist, two congregations, would share a campus, a shared physical space. Creating some of that space would involve remodeling the current building at 3400 Dupont Avenue South. It is important to keep in mind that sharing space on a shared campus is not synonymous with, nor a euphemism for, “merger.” We are not merging.

It is anticipated that with the exception of clergy offices, most or all space in the building would be available for shared use, subject to agreements on priority and scheduling. The remodeling is expected to include a new and additional sanctuary space on the new third floor of what is now the educational wing. ST and 1st U would have priority use in their own sanctuaries

The board expects that an operating agreement would be created with ST and 1st U which would, among other things, spell out a conflict resolution procedure where the parties would have equal power.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What does it mean to be “leaning in”?

“Leaning in” means that co-location with 1st U is the only option that Shir Tikvah is currently expending energy and resources to explore. The board voted to explore this option exclusively in August 2018 based on the two-year detailed exploration of three options: to add on to our current building, buy another space, or co-locate. In terms of opportunity and feasibility, the board deemed co-location to be the best option. It is important to note that we are engaging in this exploration with our potential partners without the sense that we will abandon it if we “find something better.” If, however, we discover irreconcilable differences, we will stop moving forward.

Leaning in also means a willingness to shift our perspective, challenge narratives about what is “ours” (including ones founded in our collective history of trauma), and re-ground ourselves in a vision of our community's future that embraces new circumstances, growth, and evolution.

[Take me back to the top](#)

How do the members and leadership at 1st U view co-location?

Rather than paraphrase 1st U's thinking, here are their words:

“As people of faith, we are called to live and act out of a prophetic imagination about what is possible as we strive to heal the world and build the Beloved Community.”

“Both of our congregations share commitments to racial justice, ending white supremacy culture, environmental stewardship, and creating spaces that reflect our values and dedication to the community. As a shared house of worship, a shared campus, 3400 Dupont becomes a model for the partnering, collaboration, and new ways of being we hope to see in the world.”

[Take me back to the top](#)

HOW AND WHY DID THE BOARD DECIDE TO LEAN IN?

How did the ST board arrive at choosing co-location vs remodeling 1360 Minnehaha Parkway?

There was a two-year discernment process with the board including three options: renovate our building, find a new building, and co-locate. The results of that process (including financial details) are available [here](#) (the 2017 Facilities Assessment Group report) and [here](#) (the updated October 2018 congregational presentation). Please note that some information in those older reports, and in particular the architectural information about a shared campus in the October 2018 report, is now out-of-date; we've been hard at work.

It is true that there is a knowledge gap between the dozens of congregants volunteering time to the co-location exploration project and others in the congregation whose information comes from this and other similar documents. There is a joint steering committee with ST and 1st U and even that group has to meet weekly in order to see all of the work being done. Even if a congregant is fully engaged, there is no practical way for leadership to keep the congregation as a whole up to speed on the minute details of every forward motion.

We hear your desire for more process and that is our intention, too. As we move closer to a congregational decision point (currently anticipated to be late Spring 2020), we will again weigh pros and cons and engage the congregation on what we have learned and what concerns remain.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What makes co-location a terrific idea?

Many of these important and valid questions on this list come from our fears of maintaining our Jewishness and our 'Shir-Tikvah-ness' in a different container. In the years leading up to the decision to lean in to a shared space, the board has found many reasons for excitement alongside all of the essential logistical questions. Here are a few reasons for enthusiasm that have sustained us through this process:

- In a world of heartache and division, the conversation of a shared campus between Shir Tikvah and First Universalist is a healing balm. In our dialogue together, we center compassion, human dignity, and justice. Together, we address the moral scourges of racism, anti-Semitism, and white supremacy as we seek to write a new narrative in Minneapolis, a new story of hope, integrity, and two distinct congregations working to build a strong and just community.
- The “fear” voiced about our losing our Jewish identity is a reason for why we should do it—as a defiant radical act of courage that we won’t be erased; to show the world that two cultures can co-exist in close proximity without losing their identity; in fact, each would be strengthened by the exposure to different belief systems and different ways of doing things.
- We will be able to design and build our own distinctively Jewish sanctuary: spiritual space and physical space, complete with symbols, artifacts, and meaning which sings forth our Jewish identity.
- There is a spiritual feel to 3400 Dupont Avenue, where Jews started worshipping close to 100 years ago; there are stars of David and Hebrew carved into its stone facade. The sense of history makes us part of something special; it is a building with which we Jews have had a long-term relationship.
- We will leave a smaller ecological footprint in this world.
- It is a financially smart decision.
- After much work, it is the most promising path for addressing the access concerns and crowding concerns in our current building and thus living into our commitment to radical hospitality.

[Take me back to the top](#)

I know there have been updates from leadership about what’s going on, but I can’t find them. Where are they?

There’s a new page on our website collecting many of the congregational communications. You can find it [here](#). There you will see the monthly

congregational letter updates from the board President, earlier reports, and some information from First Universalist.

[Take me back to the top](#)

In what ways is ST exploring the questions and concerns around co-location?

There are currently a number of work groups exploring the critical questions we need answered in order to make a decision about moving forward. These are identified here, along with their chairs/co-chairs but not their members. They are:

- ST Steering Committee: Bruce Manning, Jeremy Pierotti, Rabbi Latz, Executive Director Alison Olig (with frequent and regular reporting to the Executive Committee and the board)
- Joint Steering Committee: the ST Steering Committee plus Rev. Jen Crow and 1st U board member Kristin Siegesmund , and 1st U leaders Cindy Marsh and Nancy Gaschott
- Architecture working group: co-chairs Sara Rothholz Weiner, Ho-Youl Chang.
- Legal Analysis and Financial Foundations: co-chairs Howard Orenstein, Amy Funk
- Calendar working group: Michael Simon
- Operating costs working group: co-chairs Jane Binder, Jeff Danovsky
- Communications and Congregational Engagement: co-chairs Ray Anshel, MJ Gilbert, Abbie Shain
- Jewish identity and spirituality: co-chairs John Walthour, Tamar Ghidalia
- Delivering youth education: co-chairs Barry Epstein, Forrest Yesnes and Rabbi Rappaport
- Capital campaign exploration: co-chairs Jeff Danovsky, Anne Trockman, Luke Weisberg

[Take me back to the top](#)

Has this decision to co-locate with 1stU already been made?

Unequivocally no; it has not been made. The groups noted above, with many helping hands, have undertaken this shared space exploration from a myriad of perspectives: legally, spiritually, architecturally, educationally, financially, logistically, physically, and spatially.

[Take me back to the top](#)

How will this final decision be made? A congregational decision? A Board decision?

Leaders at Shir Tikvah are working hard to construct a process of final decision-making that will be robust and responsive to the multitude of voices and opinions that make us this diverse community. We believe this work will produce a plan that will allow us to move ahead with confidence and integrity. For now, if you have thoughts, ideas, feelings, and ideas to share, please email sthopesanddreams@gmail.com.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Is there a specific date by which we need to decide whether to co-locate or not?

There is no firm, final date by which we need to make this decision although that may change. Our present and shared intent with 1st U is to have a final decision making process in the late Spring of 2020. The committees noted above, and some retained professionals, are all working to ensure as timely a date as possible. As you might imagine, there are many moving pieces to this process.

[Take me back to the top](#)

To what extent is this decision based on the close friendship between our Rabbis and 1st U's clergy?

Our rabbis and 1st U clergy are friends and partners as progressive faith leaders in South Minneapolis. However, as much as we value relationships at Shir Tikvah, our decision to “lean in” is not because our clergy are friends and like-minded partners. Our facilities discernment is not only about the present leaders and present families in both congregations, but also about the future. If we decide to co-locate at 3400 Dupont, these relationships will give way to new relationships beyond what we can imagine now in 2019. It will attract future families and leaders who share our values of collaboration, environmental sustainability, and shared commitment to social justice values. The next clergy to come to Shir Tikvah will choose it because of many things, including its shared campus with 1st U.

[Take me back to the top](#)

HOW WILL THIS ACTUALLY WORK?

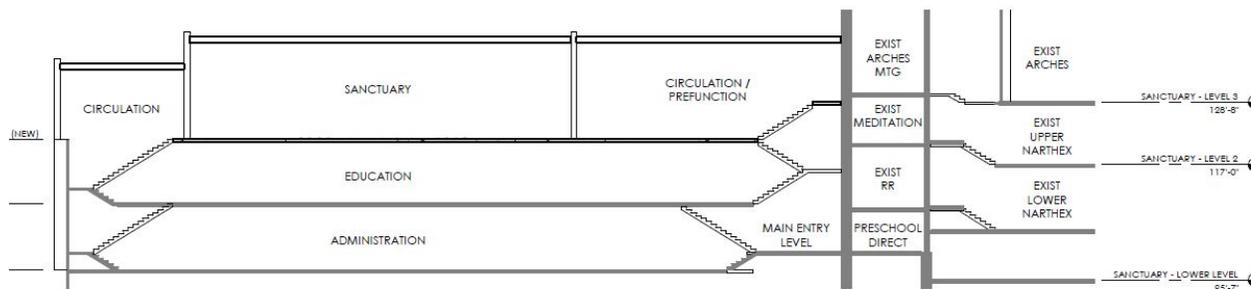
Will there be additional/new spaces at 3400 Dupont?

Yes! There will be a new worship space that is primarily for our use, with movable seating that will seat, perhaps, 400, as well as other potentially new or re-designated spaces (classrooms, offices) in the renovation. With the renovation, the balcony in the current sanctuary and the Arches Room between the two towers will become accessible to all for the first time. After spending some time with project architects Miller Dunwiddie to confirm and design ST's space needs, we are now jointly working with 1st U and Miller Dunwiddie on options for the shared campus. The current timeline is to have drawings and preliminary budgets by the Fall of 2019.

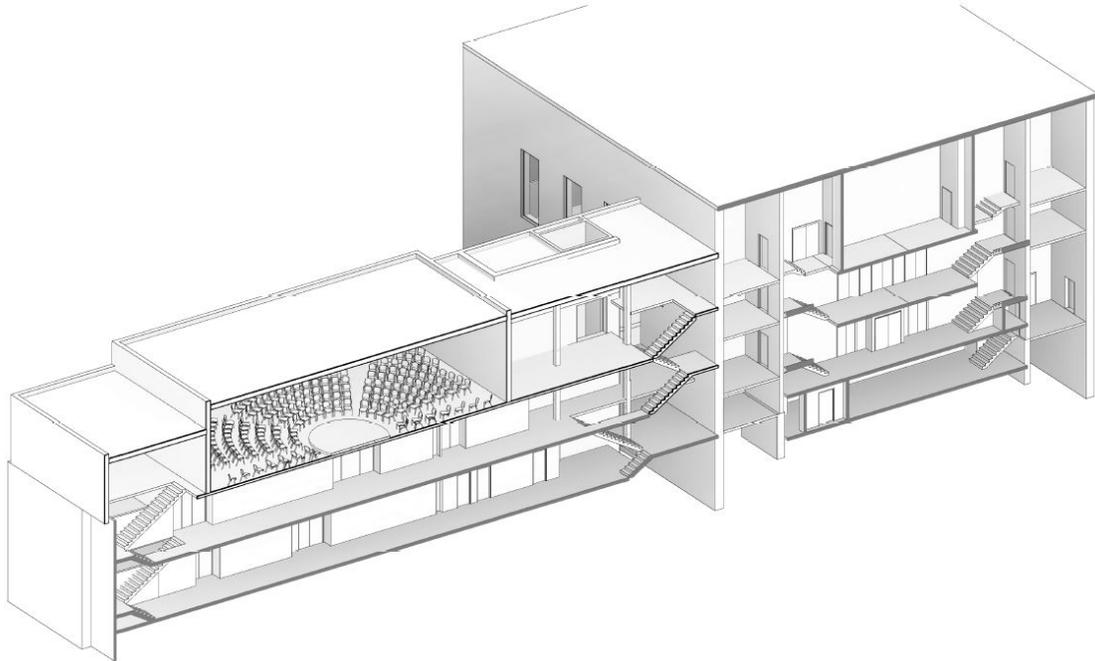
[Take me back to the top](#)

Will co-location mean that our sanctuary will be on the 3rd floor; that we'd be "Jews in the attic?"

As we know from our years of using the 1st U's building for High Holy Days, there is no sanctuary on the first floor. If you climb the elegant front stairs from Dupont Avenue, under the carved Hebrew and stars of David in the historic facade, you still have to climb another flight of stairs once you are inside to get to the original sanctuary. If you enter off 34th street at grade, you have to climb two interior stairs to the historic sanctuary. And the balcony is one flight more above that. The sanctuary space we would build is on the third floor of the education wing and if you enter from the atrium on Dupont, it is two floors up from the entry. If you enter from the historic building, it is two and half floors up from entry. So, yes, our main sanctuary would be on the third floor, but so is the historic sanctuary 1st U will be primarily using. If you're a visual person, perhaps this cross-section drawing, looking at the building's levels from Dupont Avenue, helps:



In this next cross section, the historic sanctuary's balcony is on the top at the right. That sanctuary's entrance is the floor below that. On the left, where the ST sanctuary is shown, *please note* that those are moveable seats in one possible configuration.



[Take me back to the top](#)

Will both ST and 1st U have access to all spaces at 3400 Dupont?

Our understanding—shared by 1st U—is that both ST and 1st U will have access to the spaces in the building; for example, we may have events for which their sanctuary best fits our needs (as has been the case in the past) and our sanctuary may be one that they wish to use as well. Our intention is that with the exception of sanctuaries, most of the spaces at 3400 Dupont will not be neatly ST's or 1st U's. They will be ours. And to the extent that certain spaces may be for the primary use of one or the other congregation (as would be the case for the sanctuaries), we will share those spaces with each other as possible. An operating agreement will be drafted to address uses and priorities, but we will always have our sanctuary on our worship days.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What would ST's worship space be like at 3400 Dupont? Would we/could we use their sanctuary?

We don't know what the space would actually look like yet because architectural plans have not yet been finalized and interior plans have not been created. We are committed to a Jewish space with movable seating that supports multiple worship formats, including worship in the round and in rows. We would most likely be able to use 1st U's sanctuary for special events when many would attend. Details are currently being explored.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What would be the impact of co-location on our Jewish cultural and spiritual identity?

There is no simple way to answer this question nor is this space ample enough to do it justice. It is why we have a group dedicated to exploring this question, co-chaired by John Walthour and Tamar Ghidalia. Their recommendations can be found [here](#).

We are committed to the notion that a shared space is not a diminution of our commitment to Jewish culture and spiritual identity but rather an expression of it. We are committed to this idea in much the same way that congregations in Ann Arbor, Vail, Omaha, and Spring House Ministry Center here in Minneapolis are committed to it and whose congregations have thrived and have retained their own religious vision while being under one roof, while sharing a campus.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Is having our own building vital to the identity of our congregation?

Shir Tikvah's legacy is one of creative Jews sharing space in pizza places (thank you, Founders!), homes, community centers, porches, shacks, churches, basements, and the street. As a targeted minority, one who has suffered from historical trauma, explicitly Jewish spaces are particularly sacred to us. Our intention is that in leaning into this conversation, we are leaning into the idea that, while claiming our history, we are not subject to it, that we do not need to claim sole ownership of a property in order to create explicitly Jewish space;

and that sharing a building speaks vividly to creating the world we hope for, a world that is gentler on the earth and more focused on what we share than what we own.

We also believe that much of our Jewish identity formation happens outside of the four walls of the shul or the three walls of the *sukkah*. We know that formation happens at Shabbat dinner and the walk/drive/bus/bike to religious school. We know that it happens at STiFTY bonfires and Passover seders, under our feet and in our hearts in marches, and at Kabbalat Shabbat services, High Holidays, and in lifelong learning programming for our youth and adults. We need a building as a container for our community, but we hope that our Jewish identities are much larger than that.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Will 1st U still refer to the building as a church? Will we be able to call it a synagogue?

Shir Tikvah will still be a synagogue. 1st Unitarian Church will still be a church. Those designations refer to our congregations, not the building in which we meet. (Shir Tikvah has never met in a building built as a synagogue, outside of High Holy Days at 1st U!) What the redesigned building will be called is yet to be decided.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What about the kitchen? How will we decide who gets to use it when? Will 1st U have pork and shellfish in the building?

While the details are yet to be negotiated, we expect that 1st U will be respectful of our practices and beliefs and that we will find ways to accommodate both parties' needs. The co-location conversation reminded lay and professional leaders that we do not presently have a coherent or enforced policy on food in our own building (perhaps to your surprise?). A working group, independent of co-location, is advancing that work right now for board consideration.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Will 1st U be our landlord?

No. We will be co-owners. We are currently exploring a model where a third non-profit entity would be formed that would own and maintain the building. ST and 1st U would each own shares in this new non-profit, and there would be a board with an equal number of ST and 1st U members. This will be a shared enterprise in as many aspects as possible. This idea is very much still in development.

[Take me back to the top](#)

When would we actually co-locate?

It will be a matter of years. First, after careful and appropriate information gathering, sharing, and deliberation, there has to be a decision to co-locate. That decision process will likely begin in the Spring of 2020. Then we have to fundraise. Then we have to build/remodel part of the existing space. As best as we can imagine this process, the earliest we could move to 3400 Dupont Avenue is in 2022.

[Take me back to the top](#)

HOW WILL CO-LOCATION IMPACT OUR FAMILIES?

Will religious school continue on Sundays or will it be moved to Saturdays?

We will not be able to have Sunday School on Sunday mornings at 3400 Dupont Avenue because we know that 1st U uses all of the classroom spaces until roughly 2 p.m. Sunday afternoons. This structure is a core part of how they practice their religious commitments and build their community. We have not asked them to alter that. Instead, we are looking to determine the best ways to advance our own education mission. Thank you to at least Aaron Lichtov, Barry Epstein, Abby Fenton, Jennie Teichman, Tamara Rhodes, Dana Bennis, Gayle Zoffer, along with Inclusion & Wellness Coordinator Raena Davison, Director of Youth Education and Programming Forrest Yesnes, and Director of Lifelong Learning Rabbi Debra Rappaport who have begun to think and work on this topic. We are excited about all the possibilities, in time and space, in which our

students and families can be engaged in whole-person Jewish learning which is meaningful, joyous, and organically connected with the Jewish cycles of time.

Since at least 2012, we have been committed to aligning our Jewish learning to Jewish time and Jewish action. Our leadership team is already working to design a thoughtful, progressive curriculum consistent with our values, reinvigorating our education program to be values-driven and engaging for families. We can and will innovate to provide a deeper connection to Judaism. We will continue to seek congregant input on youth education as we go, and we don't expect that significant changes would be implemented before 2022. This reconsideration of youth education, in light of our values, will happen whether we co-locate or not.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Will there be Christmas decorations in this shared space that our kids will see when they come to services in December?

Specific decisions about decoration of shared spaces have not been made, and matters like this will be part of the day-to-day and year-to-year engagement the two congregations have as our relationships deepen. That engagement has already begun, including helping the folks at 1st U understand the sensitivities and historical trauma that informs our reactions to Christian cultural symbols. The ways we conduct these conversations over time, and the policies that result from those conversations, will be the work of this long-term relationship.

[Take me back to the top](#)

WHAT IF???

Is there a fail-safe to our decision to co-locate should we reach irreconcilable differences?

Should we reach a point where our leaning-in process results in a decision that co-location is not the direction we want to take, we will revisit the other options that the Facilities Assessment Group originally considered and re-engage the process of discernment as to what the best alternatives are for

moving forward. While we are in this leaning-in process, those considerations are on the back burner, but we will continue to maintain our current building in such a way that it is safe and functional (within the constraints that make us consider new space in the first place). We have maintained our relationship with Cushman & Wakefield, the realtor who was looking to help us acquire space to buy or rent.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What happens if in 5 years ST or 1st U needs more space?

The two congregations enter into this partnership in good faith and with ongoing conversation about how the relationship can continue to meet our needs. While the plans we are making take future expectations into account, there is change that we cannot plan for. We will continue to work as partners to resolve issues as they arise, recognizing that our doing so is not just “business” but rather the spiritual and political healing work of this partnership.

We anticipate that the legal agreements between ST and 1st U will support partnership by including, for example, a commitment that neither party may take any action that would threaten the existence of the other.

[Take me back to the top](#)

What if holidays other than Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fall on Sunday or on one of 1st U’s holidays? And would we be able to use the building on Christian holidays (e.g. Christmas Eve movie night)

While it is impossible to account for unforeseen contingencies, we anticipate a relationship in which we work to accommodate each other’s scheduling needs. We also anticipate that the new building will allow both congregations to hold functions at the same time. As a point of information, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur never fall on a Sunday (the designers of the Jewish calendar were, indeed, a forward thinking group, committed to avoiding preparation on Shabbat).

[Take me back to the top](#)

HOW WILL CO-LOCATION IMPACT SHIR TIKVAH FINANCIALLY?

Are we leaning in to co-location because we can't afford anything better?

This process started with the question, “what facilities do we need to do our work in the world?”. What quickly became clear—and what we all know—is that our current facilities do not meet the current or future needs we have for who we are and what we want to do. This did not start with “what can we afford?” The conclusion we reached after more than two years of research, consultation, and deliberation was that sharing an expanded building at 3400 Dupont provided the best answer to that question. Finances are certainly part of that equation, for we want the money we generate to have the greatest impact. Finances have never been the driver of this decision to consider co-location.

[Take me back to the top](#)

How will the money work? What is the cost or cost savings of co-location?

The specifics have not yet been decided, but there will be an operating and governance agreement that details each party's financial obligations, maintenance of the building, etc.

The joint steering committee, in conjunction with the joint Legal Analysis and Financial Foundations committee, relying on expertise from staff at both organizations and some initial analysis done by Jane Binder and Jeff Danovsky, will be continuing to improve our understanding of how the operations and maintenance of the new (and much larger) space will compare to our current operations. Note, [on page 5](#), that our building currently has significant deferred maintenance and the new campus would, initially, be new.

Our charge is to look for creative ways to combine resources and share expenses with 1st U to run the two congregations in the most efficient and cost-effective way for both entities.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Will my annual dues/giving be going towards the 1st U building/ congregation?

To the extent that dues to the general fund go to supporting the maintenance and upkeep of the space we will be sharing, one could say that dues to ST will also benefit 1st U (it will not be “their building”; it will be OUR building, collectively). The same can be said for programming; we may share resources around social justice or activism, as well as Sanctuary or other joint initiatives. And it can also be said, if one sticks with this view of things, that 1st U’s dues will be going to support the ST building and congregation. Given that the vast majority of the ST budget goes to pay our staff (Rabbis, educators, executive director, support staff), we can count on dues to continue to support the same core functions that they currently do.

[Take me back to the top](#)

Will there be shared staff?

We will have our own Rabbinic, educational, and directorial staff, as has been the case. It is likely that in a shared space, maintenance and custodial staff might be shared. The question of whether other support functions might be shared is one that remains to be answered, but it is anticipated that core staff functions specific to the operation of our congregation will continue as they have.

[Take me back to the top](#)