

With green move, Synagogue saves \$24,000 a year

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By BART JONES bart.jones@newsday.com



Photo credit: Photo by Jason Andrew | LED lights hang from the ceiling at the Community Synagogue on September 20, 2010 in Port Washington, NY. At the Community Synagogue, Steve Kaplan has helped cut the energy bills by 22 percent. Photo by Jason Andrew (September 20, 2010)

The Community Synagogue in [Port Washington](#) has saved about \$24,000 a year in energy bills by "going green" - mainly with moves such as switching to more efficient LED light bulbs and installing sensors that turn lights off in empty rooms.

Steve Kaplan, who coordinated the transformation on behalf of the temple, said he's been astounded by the savings. "The numbers have been phenomenal," he said.

The overhaul is part of a trend officials at a [Molloy College](#) institute are hoping to expand by encouraging houses of worship to go green. The institute sees houses of worship as prime candidates for more energy efficient practices because they often have spacious, yet inefficient, prayer sanctuaries, and because as community leaders they can set a good example.

"The idea is they can go green and help the planet, which has a moral aspect as well, and also ideally helps them save money," said Beth Fiteno of the Sustainability Institute at Molloy in [Rockville Centre](#), which promotes environmentally friendly practices. "The places of worship play a leadership role in the community. What they do can serve as a good role model for the general population."

The institute has already documented nearly two dozen houses of worship that have gone green on [Long Island](#), by installing solar panels and other methods, and Fiteno says there are probably more. Still, officials there acknowledge much more needs to be done since there are hundreds of religious institutions in the area. "We still have quite a ways to go," Fiteno said.

On Thursday, the institute is hosting a conference in [Farmingdale](#) on houses of worship going green, expecting to attract at least 100 people from various faiths.

Kaplan said he became fascinated with "greening" a few years ago, and started implementing the technology little by little. He said that, for instance, the synagogue has replaced heavy-duty bulbs of up to 300 watts with 23- to 25-watt LEDs or compact fluorescent bulbs - and lost nothing in terms of quality of lighting.

"Our choir said the lighting is better than it ever was before," he said.

They've implemented other measures such as installing a digital thermostat on the heating system that allows different rooms to be heated only when scheduled to be in use during the week. Sensors on outdoor lights leave one on throughout the night, but activate two others if someone enters the property.

Fiteno said the first thing her group recommends is making buildings energy-efficient by, for instance, filling in cracks in walls and installing better insulation. After that, other steps include updating heating and cooling systems, and even placing plants on rooftops, especially flat ones. That helps keep buildings cool during the summer, she said.

She noted that LIPA now offers free energy audits to houses of worship.