

Bricks and Mortals

Mahnoor Fatima, Program Manager

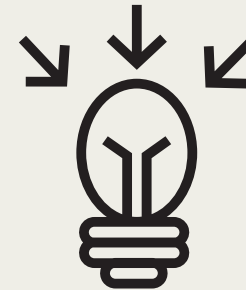
Bronx CB 8

06/23/25



Bricks & Mortals

Who is Bricks and Mortals?



Established in 2019, our core purpose is to ensure that faith-based organizations have the knowledge, connections, access to resources, and advocacy they need to:

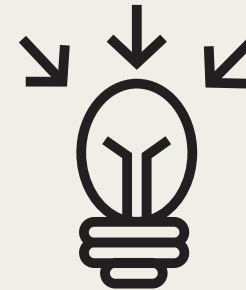
Manage their real properties in service of their missions and communities

Understand and address new realities that affect faith communities and their real estate

Build resilience

Take charge of their own destinies and legacies

Why we're unique



Nonprofit, multi-faith, membership organization

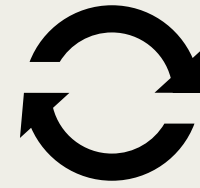
Faith-based & real-estate communities

Focused on NYC, but work nationally

Impartial: Not connected to any company

Unbiased: Outcome neutral, provide and expand options

How we work



Faith led! Designed for Faith Members Interests

Ethics Agreement & Background Research

Annual Approval by Membership Board

Members vote for Board Members ↔
Board approve members

How we've helped



Provided assistance to a church in Manhattan to create a long term plan for Local Law 97

Provided guidance to a synagogue in Queens on how to start renting their space

Emergency support for a church in Brooklyn to figure out how to not have their electricity turned off that weekend

Advised possible solutions to financing a capital project to fix building foundations for a church in the Bronx

Discussed advocacy opportunities for Faith-Based Development in Long Island

Why we exist

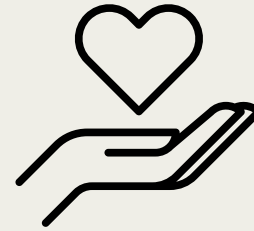


Sacred spaces vital role in communities...

Meets a changing landscape...

Facing urgent crisis

Faith organizations in communities



The average urban sacred site generates **\$1.7 million** in economic impact annually

87% of the beneficiaries are not members of the congregation

Faith-based organizations provide **58% of emergency shelter beds** in the 11 cities surveyed across the nation

Faith-based organizations deliver **40% of vital human services** in cities

Changing landscape



Attendance down

The percentage of Americans holding membership in a house of worship dropped below 50% for the first time in history, with the median church size halving. Attendance and participation is closely tied to congregational budget size.

Declining religiosity

There is an increasingly non-religious population growing in numbers. Often referred to as the “nones”, fewer than half (47%) of Americans say they belong to a church, synagogue or mosque.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Houses of faith closings have accelerated since the pandemic. Protestant pastors reported that typical church attendance is only 85% of pre-pandemic levels, and research found that attendance was down to 67% weekly, versus 75% before the pandemic. With the advent of virtual and hybrid worship, houses of worship no longer need to be neighborhood based and services no longer need to be attended in person.

New York City landscape



Scale: +6,000 faith-owned properties in NYC

92m square feet of land (2.5x the size of Central Park!)

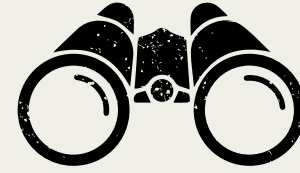
86m square feet of available FAR would yield approximately 98,000 homes

Often in landmarked buildings

NYC is expensive

Opportunity

What does this all mean?



Faith based organizations
are closing...

Those that continue to
operate, costs to maintain
have skyrocketed...

For the first time, more Protestant churches **closed** in 2019 than opened

Unsustainable costs: Church property costs \$7 to \$10 per square foot annually to operate - \$70,000 to \$100,000 for a 10,000-square-foot property

What does this all mean?



Congregations need
diversified revenue to
survive

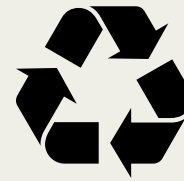
Communities set to lose
vital third spaces and
resources

Scale is massive

75 to 150 congregations per week
closed between 2010-2020 in the US

100,000 properties are expected to
be **sold or repurposed** by 2030 --
billions of dollars in church-owned
property

Examples of adapting faith property



Sharing space

Short- and long-term rentals

Renting to nonprofit organizations

Short-term space sharing with artists,
community groups (AA), etc

Worship space for other faith communities

Full redevelopment

E.g. affordable, market or mixed housing

Partial redevelopment

Sale and search

Air rights

How B&M can help



Responsive programs and resources developed in response to faith community needs

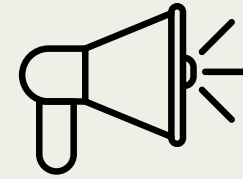
Proactive **outreach to diverse congregations** and communities

Relationships across **NYC government, private and non-profit sectors**

Driving **sustainable public policy** solutions

The leading community based organization **connecting the faith and real estate communities**

Advocacy & *Impact*



B&M Membership developed [Policy Platform for NYC's Next Mayor \(2021\)](#).

Bricks And Mortals Garner Strong Support From NYC Mayoral Candidates

Chair of the Mayor's Working Group on Faith-Based Affordable Housing and Community Development (2022-present)

An Action Plan with +40 proposals fall 2022

Two Citywide Summits with Mayor's office (12/22 and 03/24)

+50% of proposals included in City of Yes legislation, or otherwise adopted

New York State Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act

Contributed to drafting bill

Outreach and advocacy

Connections & Convening *Impact*



The only community of **faith and real estate communities**

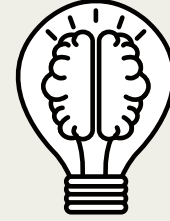
2 Faith-Based Affordable Housing Summits with Mayor Adams and the Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnership (2022, 2024)

Bimonthly membership meetings

Networking events for faith + real estate communities

Monthly newsletters with resources, events, and opportunities

Knowledge & *Impact*



Advise faith-based organizations, including via **one-on-one consultation**

19 original case studies from members presented

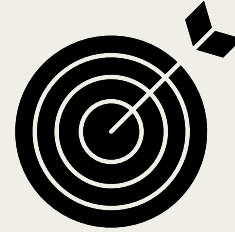
+50 public and membership events held

Weekly updates on faith real estate news and media

Password-protected Membership section

Original research strengthening the field

Resource & *Impact*



Space sharing website, [Venuely](#)

Grant and organizational funding

Resources that are developed **in response** to the faith community and members' specific needs, as they arise

Real estate listings

Long-term: Monthly “Faith-Based Property List” - FBOs searching for and offering space

Short-term: Bricks and Mortals’ space sharing website - [Venuely.org](#)

What's Next



Brooklyn Borough President's **Accelerator for Faith-Based Affordable Housing:**

A partnership of the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President and B&M

Focus on supporting houses of faith **responding to migrant crisis**

Annual Faith-Owned Property Conference (launching fall 2025)

B&M Member developed **Policy Platform for the 2025 Mayoral Election**

What's Next



Events: Bimonthly Membership meetings, Networking events, 4-6 public events annually

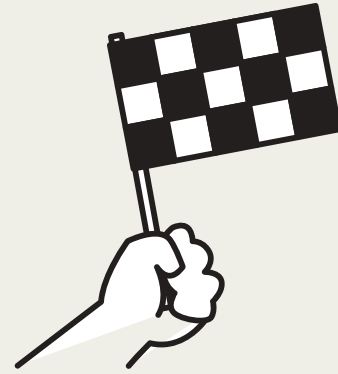
New: **Health Assessment**

This assessment will help houses of faith understand where their strengths are in four specific categories (Finance, Property, Congregation and Community), and resources on how to strengthen in any area of need.

New: **Member Directory**

The new Directory will help our members connect, collaborate, and access shared resources. It will only include members, who have all signed an Ethics Pledge and been approved by the Board.

What Can You Do?



Are you member of a house of faith or the real estate community?

[Become a Member!](#)

[Refer Bricks and Mortals to faith-based organizations in your neighborhood](#)

Take advantage of our resources: guidance documents, events, case studies, trainings and more

Connect With Us!



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