

**Meeting Minutes of the Housing Committee
Bronx Community Board 8
Monday, June 23, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.
Board Office – 5676 Riverdale Ave, Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471**

[Meeting Recording](#)

Attendance

Present (3): Sebastian Chittilappilly, Rhashida Hilliard (Chair), & Jessica Sosa

Absent (2): Lee Chong (Vice Chair), & Yngrid DeLeon

Guests In-Person:

N/A

Guests Online:

Mahnor Fatima, Paul Hogan, Aubrey Balcom, & M. Lisa Hollingsworth

We had a quorum.

1. Welcome and Roll Call:

Meeting was officially called to order at 6:30pm.

2. Approval of Minutes of Meeting of April 28, 2025:

The meeting minutes of meeting of April 28, 2025 were approved.

3. Guest Speaker – Mahnoor Fatima, Program Manager from [Bricks & Mortals](#), a grassroots membership organization that consists of individuals and organizations from faith-based institutions and real estate experts, was invited to address the following:

- What is the mission of Bricks & Mortals?
- What programs does Bricks & Mortals offer?
- How can we (at Bricks & Mortals) collaborate with your community?
- With the passing of City of Yes resources, how can Bricks & Mortals help your community members navigate the upcoming zoning changes?

According to Mahnoor, Bricks & Mortals was established in 2019. It is the only multifait, faith-based organization. Bricks & Mortals helps houses of faith all over New York City. Likewise, they offer have offered food and school drives and mental health services. Overall, Bricks & Mortals is willing to collaborate with the community and can help layout a 5 to 50 year plan, if necessary. For more information about what Bricks & Mortals has to offer, please refer to the slide deck attached and/or the Zoom recording.

4. **Question and Answer Session:**

A question was posed regarding membership and funding with respect to Bricks & Mortals. Bricks & Mortals receives funding from private foundations as well as state and city agencies. They received no federal funding. Members pay their membership fees on a sliding scale. Please refer to the slide deck and recording for a more detailed explanation of the Q&A session.

5. **VOTE: Resolution in Support of the Tenants Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)**

The Housing Committee Calling on Bronx Community Board 8 to support The Tenants Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) Resolution

WHEREAS, eight (8) out of the Bronx's twelve (12) community districts have been beleaguered by high eviction notices, rent-burdened households in which a household spends more than 30% of their income on housing costs such as rent & utilities, and other tenant-related housing concerns which include but are not limited to dilapidated conditions and negligent landlords as of 2023; and

WHEREAS, the median household income for Bronx Community Board 8 (Bronx CB8) is \$81,095 though approximately 35% of the population has a median household income of under \$50K while 27% make between \$50-100K as of 2023, with some neighborhoods within CB8 experiencing higher rates of poverty than others; and

WHEREAS, over 50% of renters in Bronx CB8 are considered rent-burdened as of December 2024; and

WHEREAS, local housing which includes having access to affordable and accessible housing whether they be rental properties or cooperative homes for purchase for low and middle income individuals and families is a concern for Bronx Community Board 8; and

WHEREAS, The **Tenants Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)** is a proposed law that allows tenants the opportunity to make an offer to purchase their building if the landlord decides to sell it, also known as First Right of Refusal, and

WHEREAS, **TOPA** seeks to prevent the displacement of lower-income tenants in New York and preserves affordable housing by providing an opportunity for tenants to form an association to work toward homeownership or remain renters in the properties in which they reside; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Housing Committee calls on the New York State legislature and Governor Hochul to pass and enact the **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)**, sponsored by Assemblymember Mitaynes (A6100) and Senator Myrie (S401).

Sources

[CB8 data](#)

[Census reporter](#)

Approve in favor (3): S. Chittilappilly, R. Hilliard, & J. Sosa

Abstain: 0

Opposed: 0

The resolution in support of the Tenants Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. **Chair's Report:**

Local Law 119 of 2024, also known as the Fairness in Apartment Rental Expenses (FARE) Act:

Fairness in Apartment Rental Expenses (FARE) Act

The Fairness in Apartment Rental Expenses (FARE) Act took effect on June 11, 2025. This law prohibits brokers who represent landlords from charging broker fees to tenants. This includes brokers who publish listings with the landlord's permission. Landlords or their agents must disclose other fees that the tenant must pay in their listings and rental agreements.

File a Complaint

DCWP enforces this law and conducts education and outreach. Any person who violates this bill would be subject to a civil penalty or civil action. [Submit an online complaint against a landlord or real estate agent about broker fees.](#)

7. **Old Business:**

N/A

8. **New Business:**

N/A

9. **Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm

Minutes submitted by Rhashida Hilliard, Housing Committee Chair

Bricks and Mortals

Mahnoor Fatima, Program Manager

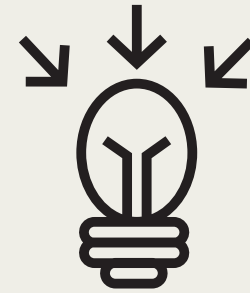
Bronx CB 8

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:

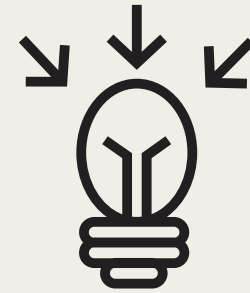
Manage their real properties in service of their missions and communities

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

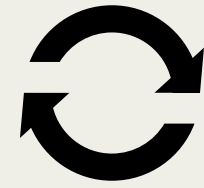
Faith-based & real-estate communities

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

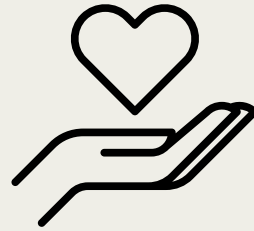


Sacred spaces vital role in communities...

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!)

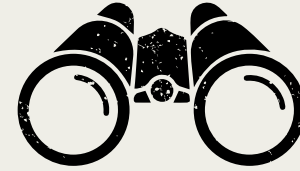
86m square feet of available FAR would yield approximately 98,000 homes

Often in landmarked buildings

NYC is expensive

Opportunity

What does this all mean?



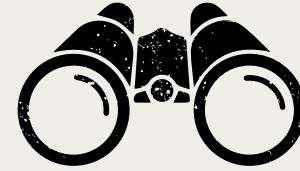
**Faith based organizations
are closing...**

**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

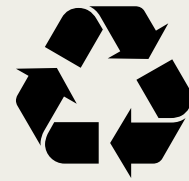
Communities set to lose vital third spaces and resources

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

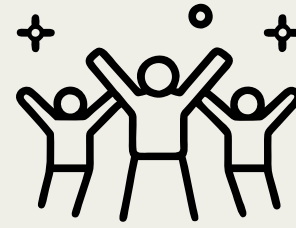
E.g. affordable, market or mixed housing

Partial redevelopment

Sale and search

Air rights

How B&M can help



Responsive programs and resources developed in response to faith community needs

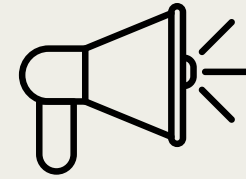
Proactive **outreach to diverse congregations** and communities

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**

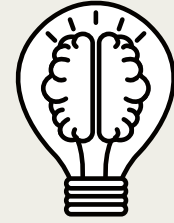
2 Faith-Based Affordable Housing Summits with Mayor Adams and the Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnership (2022, 2024)

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

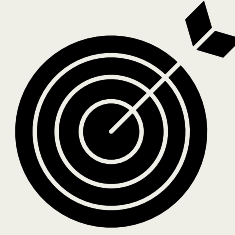
+50 public and membership events held

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

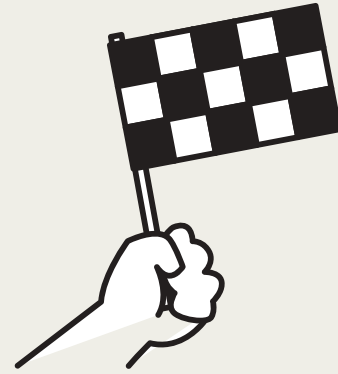
New: **Health Assessment**

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!](#)

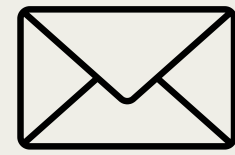
[Refer Bricks and Mortals to faith-based organizations in your neighborhood](#)

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

Connect With Us!



www.bricksandmortals.org



info@bricksandmortals.org



@bricksandmortalsny

