

## Bricks and Mortals Policy Statement

### Manhattan President Gale Brewer - Religious Facilities Task Force

Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer  
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Borough President Brewer:

Thank you again for convening the Religious Facilities Task Force to discuss and find solutions on this important issue. Below are Bricks and Mortals policy recommendations for the Task Force and Capstone team:

**Air rights:** Potential receiving sites for air rights transfers by non-profits and houses of worship should be expanded, however, this needs to be balanced with incentives for mission-consistent development. Bricks and Mortals supports changes to zoning regulations to create air rights transfer districts across the City, such as by Community Board. Subject to CPC certification, air rights from a non-profit, including houses of worship, could be transferred to an appropriate receiving site within a transfer district, subject to the seller paying 25% of the net proceeds to the city for use in a public realm improvement fund which would invest in public infrastructure, parks, and open spaces, and affordable housing.

**Sole sourcing of city owned property for development:** A policy should exist whereby if the City is going to sell property, it should give a right of first offer/refusal to any faith institution or nonprofit that is adjacent to (or could transfer air rights to or from) such property.

**Resources for community-based asset mapping:** Resources and guidance are needed so that faith institutions can maximize efforts within their communities and are not acting within a vacuum. These resources could be used to analyze unused air rights, unused or underused space within buildings, development potential, community organizations with space needs, and other community needs.

**Technical assistance and funding:** Incenting the health of these valuable institutions and creating opportunities instead of obstacles to achieving sustainability; this means recognizing the enormous benefit of these institutions and what it would cost the City to replace the services religious institutions and non-profits offer. We need partnerships, technical assistance, recognition and staffing.

One, support is needed to improve the financial health of religious institutions. Specifically, helping faith institutions to understand the efficacy of 501(c)3 secular affiliates and other legal mechanisms. This also includes funded support for pre-development for individual congregations to assess their options with a team of unbiased professionals.

**Bricks and Mortals Policy Statement**  
**Manhattan President Gale Brewer - Religious Facilities Task Force**

Two, we need support to access discretionary operating and capital funding. These processes are arduous and have very specific, changing guidelines, which are often impossible to tackle with a very small number of paid staff – even if the institutions are supporting important public work. More funding is of course also needed via these mechanisms as well as others.

And, three, specifically with regard to the new environmental law requiring retrofitting, religious institutions are not exempt, and these changes are very costly. Though it is in the best interest of faith institutions to become environmentally improved and accessible (both of which are a public good), we need support, both technical and financially, to viably make these changes.

Signed,

Bricks and Mortals Leadership Committee

Taylor Aikin, Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects  
Rebecca Amato, NYU Urban Democracy Lab  
Braham Berg, Impact Developer + Designer, Principal Consultant, BBB3RG LLC  
Meta Brunzema, Collective for Community, Culture and Environment  
Peter Cook, New York State Council of Churches  
Lopez-Joël Dautruche, Judson Memorial Church  
Karen DiLossi, Partners for Sacred Places  
Robert Foltz-Morrison, Presbytery of NYC  
Marc Greenberg, Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing  
Joseph Holland, 400 Foundation  
Jason Labate, Goldstein Hall  
Roger Leaf, Presbytery of NYC  
Lesley Mctague, David Stark Design & Production  
Myers Mermel, Tenant Wise  
Pat O'Connell, West Park Presbyterian Church  
Ugochi Onyeukwu, The Riverside Church in NYC  
Nigel Pearce, Grace Congregational Church of Harlem  
Valerie Ross, United Church of Christ, NY Conference  
Donna Schaper, Judson Memorial Church  
Bill Shillady, The United Methodist City Society  
Scott Stearman, Metro Baptist Church  
Phil Tom, The Riverside Church in NYC  
Randall Toure, Riseboro Community Partnership  
Richard Van Deusen, Ethical Culture

*\*Matthew Dunbar, Habitat for Humanity, recused himself as Chair of the Religious Facilities Task Force*