Bricks & Mortals

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

06.17.21

11:00am - 12:30pm

Attendees: Kate Toth, Rhonda-Lee Davis, Donna Schaper, Heidi Blau, Laura Wolf-Powers, Meta Brunzema, Richard Koral, Robert Foltz-Morrison, Abby Nathenson, Bill Shillady, Colin McGlynn, Egbert Stolk, Jason Labate, Karen DiLossi, Larissa Ho, Stephane Pierre, Maria Coyne, Victoria Barreca, Cheryl Dudley, Marc Greenberg, Rachel Bondra, Matt Dunbar, Randall Toure, Patrick Duggan, Taylor Aikin, Braham Berg, Patrick Duggan

1. Welcome by Donna Schaper (15 mins)

- *Motion to open meeting (LC members only)*
  - *Introductions*

- *Motion to approve April minutes (LC members only)*
  - *Motion passed unanimously*

- Welcome
- We're Incorporated!

  Certificate of Incorporation was filed in early June and bylaws were adopted of meeting of Directors

  Faith-based and general member criteria has been established

  Rev. Donna Schaper and Jason Labate - Cochairs

  Taylor Aikin - Treasurer

  Rev. Cheryl Dudley - Secretary

2. Presentation from Hunter Studio on final report and findings (45 mins)

- Presentation by Prof. Laura Wolf-Powers, Stephane Pierre, Larissa Ho, and Rachel Bondra from CUNY Hunter College.

Data Analysis:

- Created a composite measure of Stressor Index: relies on information from Tax Liens, DOB Violations, ECB/OATH Violations, Vulnerability to Gentrification, Vacate Orders, Historic Districts and Landmark Status, Landmark Violations.
- Neighborhood Tabulations Areas are used as the unit of analysis
- The Bronx has the highest concentration of FBOs of any low income area experiencing neighborhood change.
- FBOs are being constructed or converted more than they are being destroyed. In gentrifying neighborhoods, FBOs are being converted to residential uses.
- Map was created mapping the stresses of each FBOs in the dataset
- Based on data analysis, the team isolated FBOs that had higher than average levels of stressors

Ground Truthing:

- Class visited the neighborhoods, Stuyvesants Heights in Brooklyn, many Stuyvesant Heights in the dataset were no longer in use or have new buildings on their sites.
- In Melrose in the Bronx, many FBOs on the list had already been demolished by the time of the survey. While there are ongoing affordable housing preservation efforts in this neighborhood, these efforts do not seem to extend to the work
- In Hollis, many FBOs are located in the denser parts of the borough; many had multilingual signs and diverse architectural styles (storefronts, traditional, etc) pointing to Queens diverse population.
- Harlem, the second highest level of stressed FBOs. There is clear evidence of gentrification in Harlem. The Hunter studio theorizes that high maintenance cost might contribute to a FBOs financial instability.
- St George, Staten Island, very isolated from the rest of the community and somewhat inaccessible because of topography. The Hunter Class theorize that the inaccessibility in the neighborhood has led to decrease attendance among older churchgoers. FBOs are physically isolated from the surrounding community.
- Hunter College Studio found vastly dissimilar narratives across all neighborhoods

Survey Design:

- Useful when operating on a hyper localized level to build coalition
- Targeted minimum 50 organizations per borough from diverse neighborhoods, tenancy situations, ethnic affiliations, cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Inteviewed 11% of FBOs from a diverse selection of 312
- Also reached organizations that were not included in the PLUTO database and NYC DOF because they are sharing spaces or renting.

- A major hurdle to engagement was linguistic barriers
- 68.6% of respondents belonged to FBOs that own their buildings
- Most FBOs interviewed have no capacity or interest in redevelopment for affordable housing.
- Top three reported supports needed: financial, legal, and real estate technical assistance.
- While low income neighborhoods have mounting gentrification pressures, they also have growing membership bases.
- FBOs in need of repairs are more likely to be approached by developers.

Conclusion + Recommendations:

- Community engagement and service work should be more widely recognized.
- FBOs should be compensated from city funding for services provided to communities
- Similarly, landmarked buildings should be supported financially to offset hardships associated with landmark status
- Diversifying B+M base should remain a priority, including offering language services
- Strengthening network of FBOs within communities
- FBOs might not always see "big picture"problems such as gentrification, coalition building from B+M would provide avenue to address these issues

Q&A + Comments:

- **Could you briefly address the idea of looking at community land trust and looking at community food kitchens?**
  The idea to do a community land trust really emanated from the recognition of the value of congregations making connections outside of denominations and for strong institutions partnering with less strong institutions. It is a financially feasible arrangement for congregations with land and those who rent to enter into together. Since we saw a lot of solutions (e.g. shared commercial kitchen) relied on owning property. The land trust allows for member organizations to pool resources (space, developable land, growing congregations, etc). It would permanently create a site where multi-faith spaces can exist where people are familiar with services and service providers.

- **Did you see any correlation between FBOs that had strong community ties with their ability to successfully launch a project?**
  Of the faith leaders we interview, the ones who were able to solve their own financial problems and goals tended to be networked within their own denomination.They were mainline prodestant. The congregations who we saw struggle the most, but who were just as connected to the broader community, were ones who were well integrated in the urban fabric but were not financially connected to FBOs in the same denomination or part of an interfaith coalition.

Resources on the economic impact of churches?

http://www.religjournal.com/pdf/ijrr12003.pdf
The Socio-economic Contribution of Religion to American Society: An Empirical Analysis

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/15/us-religion-worth-1-trillion-study-economy-apple-google

The low interest in affordable housing development recorded in the survey might be a result of the development community's pursuit of church property. Churches are not interested in giving up ownership. As B+M develops programming, we should recognize that retaining ownership is important to churches.

B+M should work to develop true collaboration between FCOs (faith and cultural organization) and government and FCOs and anchor institutions (e.g. hospital)

B+M can engage denominational organization that perform development work within their own denominations to provide resources and information on challenges such as tax lien, etc. as they have become familiar with hurdles to development.

3. B&M Updates (Kate Toth - 20 mins)

- Awarded NYCT grant!

  Current grant is ending in June, and B+M has been another two year grant in partnership with Partners for Sacred Spaces

- Update on Policy Platform for NYC Next Mayor and discussions held

  Have held discussions with five Democratic candidates

- Applications open for Lilly cohorts (until Friday, July 2, 2021)
  - See s4program.org for more details

- Events:
  - *May 17th: Real Estate Planning 101 for Communities of Faith*, co-sponsored by AIA
  - *June 14th: Accessing Religious Tax Exemptions*, co-sponsored with Muslim Community Network, Department of Finance, and the Mayor's Center for Faith and Community Partnerships
  - *Upcoming in July: Pre-Development and Affordable Housing for FBOs*, co-sponsored with the Partnership with Faith Based Affordable and Community Development, IAHH, IAHC, NYSCOC, and the Mayor's Center for Faith and Community Partnerships

        - Recordings of past events linked on website: https://www.bricksandmortals.org/events

4. Closing (Kate Toth & Donna Schaper - 10 mins)

- Planning for next year (timing of meetings): please advise on (un)availability for 2021-2022 meetings
- *Motion to close meeting*