

THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY

October 3, 2017

Mr. David Shor & Members
Congregation Anshei Lubawitz of Borough Park
4024 12th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11218-1907

Dear Mr. Shor, and members of Congregation Anshei Lubawitz of Borough Park:

Congregation Anshei Lubawitz, dating from 1906, is the oldest surviving purpose-built synagogue in Brooklyn that is still in synagogue use. (Note: a handful of earlier purpose-built Brooklyn synagogue structures survive, but have been substantially altered, or are now in use for other purposes, such as Yeshivath Kehilath Yakov in Williamsburgh). Anshei Lubawitz, originally constructed as the predecessor shul to Young Israel Beth El/Temple Beth El of Boro Park, at 4802 Fifteenth Avenue, appeared in Oscar Israelowitz's 1982 book, *Synagogues of New York City*. Anshei Lubawitz, with its lively Lion of Judah carvings above the ark or Aron Kodesh, and its folk-paintings of clouds in a sky blue heaven, was featured on the back cover of the book precisely because it is such a rare and significant survivor.

In 2007-2008, the private, nonprofit New York Landmarks Conservancy conducted a comprehensive survey of Brooklyn synagogues. Although we called and sent a letter to the shul in 2007, no one responded, so we were never able to speak with the congregation about the shul's eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, a precursor to Conservancy matching grant funding. The private, nonprofit New York Landmarks Conservancy was able to list Young Israel-Beth El of Borough Park, the 1920-1923 successor to this Shul building, on the National Register in 2009.

The historical connection to the Lubavitch community adds a layer of cultural significance to its historical and architectural significance. National Register listing has NO regulatory implication, but it does allow the shul to access substantial potential grant funding for repair and restoration – including matching and challenge grants from the private, nonprofit New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy's 2007 survey laid the foundation for the launch of our Jewish Heritage Fund, with challenge grants of \$25,000 to \$50,000.

The Conservancy's Sacred Sites program has been active state-wide since 1987. Within New York City, the Conservancy has awarded 50 grants to historic synagogues in over the last 10 years, totaling over \$800,000, which have helped leverage additional outside gifts and grants, funding a total of over \$7 million in repair and restoration projects. There are several categories of grant – for architectural/engineering services, for small projects, and for large (over \$50,000) projects. I have attached a list of recent synagogue grants for your reference.

In addition to the Conservancy's Sacred Sites and Jewish Heritage Fund grants, listing on the National Register of Historic Places can qualify historic religious properties for New York State grants of up to \$500,000 for major exterior restoration projects.

We understand that it can be overwhelming to work with, and daven in, an older building. However, historic synagogues are a physical testament to the history of the Jewish community of New York. They are irreplaceable. Once renovated, historic synagogues can be the most beautiful and comfortable shuls in which to daven. We routinely work with 100 year+ old religious properties with \$100,000 to \$1 million of "deferred maintenance" – and we help congregations break down projects into feasible phases over two, or five, or ten years.

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Today, our board approved a \$50,000 challenge grant for Congregation Kol Israel in Crown Heights, to help address \$1.4 million in masonry, roof, window, and other repairs. Our help, and development of a repair budget, has helped the shul raise \$525,000 in the last 18 months; and the congregation plans to apply for a \$500,000 state grant to potentially match and augment this.

In the meantime, I would be happy to meet with you and the trustees at the Shul, to discuss potential grant projects, including window restoration, roof repair, and façade masonry repair. We could provide referrals to architects or construction managers who have had success with other state grant projects; to identify repairs needed and costs, listed by priority. We would help fund this assessment with a matching grant; and would start working to identify likely priority grant project (such as window restoration).

If you look at the list of grants, you'll see what we typically fund: structural repairs to roof truss or foundations, roof replacement, masonry repairs, window repairs. We can sometimes provide referrals for other priorities, though, like energy efficient boiler upgrades or air conditioning.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With Regards,



Ann-Isabel Friedman
Director, Sacred Sites Program