



KANE STREET SYNAGOGUE

Update: Kane Street Synagogue Restoration Project – February 2016

We are so pleased that over 80 members of the Kane Street community joined us on January 14 to learn about plans for the sanctuary's façade and towers. The event featured a presentation by Robert Bates, principal at Walter B. Melvin Architects.

Clearly, our top priority is the building's structural integrity. Robert described how probes performed at the interior walls of both towers revealed loose brickwork, deteriorated mortar joints, voids at brick masonry, sagging wood floors and window openings inappropriately closed with wood framing and masonry infill. In addition, they identified evidence of past water infiltration which – coupled with the poor quality of the original mortar and the deterioration of the stucco facing (which acts as waterproofing for the exterior) – most likely caused a small section of the stucco to fall onto the sidewalk bridge in March 2015. While the architect doesn't believe a stucco failure is likely to occur in the near future, he has commended Kane Street for taking precautions in the erection of the bridge and moving forward with a construction project at this time.

Robert discussed various options to remediate structural issues and address safety concerns, with specific consideration given to cost, quality and longevity. The architect's next step will be to investigate the exterior of the towers and the façade on Tompkins Place and Kane Street, a process they hope to complete shortly, weather permitting.

Robert also shared fascinating historical photographs of the building, as well as architectural renderings that revealed how the sanctuary's decorative components have evolved (significantly!) since its construction in the 1850s. He noted various options for Kane Street to consider, such as restoring the existing configuration or reintroducing a portion of the building's original decorative elements. Robert has reached out to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which indicated that both of these options would be approved.

Looking ahead to the next several months, Robert and his team will prepare construction drawings, which will be augmented with information gleaned from probes and a survey of the exterior. Once these documents are complete, the project will be sent to bid to contractors with experience in the restoration methods and materials planned for Kane Street. Documents will also be shared with the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Department of Buildings. If all goes as planned, we expect to engage a contractor and begin construction by late Spring.

The January 14 event was the first in a series of discussions about the restoration of our beautiful synagogue and we appreciate that so many Kane Street members took the time to attend. We look forward to continuing the conversation and keeping the community informed and engaged as we embark on this transformational, historic effort that we believe will elevate and strengthen Kane Street Synagogue for many years to come.



Photo N° 1 (Existing condition)

Note suggestions of early trim at windows and band courses.



Photo No. 2 (c1905-1930)

At far right, note east tower brownstone trim at window arches, band courses, parapet and bartizans. Note contrast between light colored stucco and brownstone trim.



Photo No. 3 (c1905)

Note crenellated parapet at east tower and center bay, and diamond-pane windows. It is likely that the top of the west tower (right) was originally decorated much like that on the east (left).