



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Senator Sanders Hosts Clergy Breakfast on How Houses of Worship Build Capacity Through Real Estate

JAMES SANDERS JR. July 19, 2018



Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Queens) recently hosted his monthly Community Clergy Breakfast with interfaith leaders so that they could learn how to make their houses of worship more economically sustainable in order to expand their ministerial outreach.

About 60 faith followers attended the Senator's breakfast at Springfield Gardens Church of the Nazarene.

This month's breakfast included two guest speakers. The first speaker was Jamie A. Smarr, Senior Vice President for The NHP Foundation. NHP is a not-for-profit real estate organization dedicated to preserving and creating sustainable, service-enriched multifamily housing that is both affordable to low- and moderate-income families and seniors, and beneficial to their communities. The second speaker was Richard Andrew Smith, President for Temple Builders, LLC, a New York based construction company focused exclusively on building places of worship.

"The purpose of my talk was to let Senator Sanders's constituents, in particular in the faith-based community, know of some opportunities and some pitfalls that we discovered with some of our other faith-based partners," said Smarr. "You need to make sure you are properly organized and that you do the proper due diligence."

As City property values increase, many houses of worship that own lots that may be vacant or underutilized are eyed by developers who manage to land grab parcels below value from unsuspecting ministries, according to Smarr.

"We are seeing a tremendous opportunity for churches to develop their property and get residual income in perpetuity to do ministry," said Smith. "We would love for all churches to move away from the tithes and offering model. We think all churches should be economically independent."

"There is a challenge that churches are being preyed upon by developers," said Smith. "The developer effectively low ball them and gives them a value that is way too low."

Both Smarr and Smith made recommendations on how churches could organize, form advisory boards, and contract building experts to help them navigate the process of

redeveloping their properties to suit their better interests.