



Environmental and Planning Consultants

440 Park Avenue South, 7th Floor
New York, New York 10016
tel: 212-696-0670
fax: 212-213-3191
www.akrf.com

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March 11, 2008

The Honorable Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair
New York City Board of Standards and Appeals
40 Rector Street - 9th Floor
New York, New York 10006

Re: **Congregation Shearith Israel ("CSI")**
6-10 West 70th Street/99 Central Park West
74-07-BZ /CEQR No.: 07BSA071M

Dear Madam Chair:

This letter responds to questions raised by the Board of Standards and Appeals at the Executive Session on February 11, 2008 and the public hearing on February 12, 2008 for the above-referenced zoning application. Specifically, this letter describes the proposed multi-function room and Toddler Program in the New Building and then evaluates them relative to the discussion of environmental effects of the New Building provided in the Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) prepared for the project in September 2007.

The following letter demonstrates that although the EAS prepared in September 2007 did not specifically address the new multi-function room or the Toddler Program, their inclusion in the New Building does not change the conclusions of the EAS.

A. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ELEMENTS

MULTI-FUNCTION ROOM

Today, the sub-grade Levy Auditorium at CSI is used for certain celebrations where large groups gather. As described in the December 28, 2007 letter submitted by Friedman & Gotbaum, these include *Kiddush* festivities following each Saturday and holiday services; life cycle events (Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, baby namings, and bris); and weddings. Today, the Levy Auditorium can house approximately 150 people.

The proposed multi-function room, to be located in the sub-cellar of the New Building, would be larger than Levy Auditorium, with a maximum occupancy of 360 people, and would have upgraded facilities, such as better access and new kitchens. The addition of this room would allow CSI greater scheduling flexibility and would allow events with larger groups, which must be turned away today. As a result, the number of events at CSI would increase, as explained below.

- **Life Cycle Events:** In the existing condition, approximately two to three life cycle events are held each month (24 to 36 per year) in the Synagogue's Main Sanctuary, with a ritual meal and communal gathering afterward in the Levy Auditorium. These events are typically held during the Sabbath, which occurs from just before sundown on Friday to after sundown on Saturday. The small size of Levy Auditorium limits the number of guests who can attend to 150; some congregants who wish to invite larger groups therefore choose to hold their life-cycle events elsewhere. With the larger multi-function room, the number of life cycle events per month would be expected to increase. Representatives of CSI estimate that approximately one additional life cycle event would occur each month with the New Building (an estimated 10 to 15 additional life cycle events per year).
- **Weddings:** Approximately eight to ten weddings are held each year in the Main Sanctuary at CSI. Approximately 12 to 15 weddings each year are not accommodated, however, because of the size limits of Levy Auditorium and because of schedule conflicts with life cycle events. Weddings are typically held on Sundays, although a small number are held on Saturday nights or weeknights. The New Building's multi-function room would accommodate larger wedding parties and would eliminate the scheduling conflicts with the Levy Auditorium. Thus, the New Building would allow an increase of an estimated one wedding per month (an estimated 12 to 15 weddings per year), of which some would be larger than 150 guests.

In total, therefore, it is estimated that 22 to 30 additional life-cycle events and weddings would occur at CSI each year (two per month) in addition to the 32 to 51 such events currently held each year (three to four per month). The 10 to 15 additional life-cycle events (one per month) would typically be held on Saturdays during the Sabbath. The 12 to 15 additional weddings (one per month) would not occur during the Sabbath. They would typically be on Sundays, with a smaller number potentially on Saturday evenings or weekdays.

TODDLER PROGRAM

CSI's Toddler Program currently operates two mornings each week, Mondays and Wednesdays, from approximately 9:30 to 11:30. A total of 20 children and their caregivers attend. A separate program serves toddlers on Saturday mornings, "Tot Shabbat." With the proposed New Building, the number of children served by the Toddler Program would increase, as would the number of days per week and the hours of the program. With the New Building, the Toddler Program would operate on Mondays through Thursdays from 8 AM to 6 PM and on Fridays from 8 AM to 4 PM and would serve approximately 60 toddlers. Caregivers would attend only as required for younger children; other caregivers would drop off the children and pick them up at the ends of their sessions. In addition, the Saturday morning program for toddlers would also continue.

B. EVALUATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

An EAS was prepared by Friedman & Gotbaum on behalf of CSI in September 2007. The EAS analyzed the effects of the proposed New Building in accordance with New York City's City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), following the methodologies of the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

The EAS described the proposed New Building and its community facility space and proposed residential units. It stated that the new community facility space would house offices and specialized rooms supporting the religious, educational, and cultural uses that are essential to CSI's mission. The EAS then concluded that the New Building, including the community facility component and the proposed residential units, would not result in significant adverse impacts in any of the environmental analysis categories set forth in the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

Although the EAS prepared in September 2007 did not specifically address the new multi-function room or the Toddler Program, their inclusion in the New Building does not change the conclusions of the EAS. A brief discussion of each category presented in the EAS follows:

- **Land Use:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program does not change the conclusions of the land use assessment. These project elements are part of the overall community facility that would be included in the New Building. The institutional portion of the building would continue the existing use on the site, which is compatible with the surrounding residential uses.
- **Socioeconomic Conditions:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the New Building, as part of the proposed community facility use, would not change the conclusions of the socioeconomic conditions screening analysis included in the EAS.
- **Community Facilities and Services:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the New Building, as part of the proposed community facility use, would not change the conclusions of the community facilities screening analysis included in the EAS.
- **Open Space:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the New Building, as part of the proposed community facility use, would not change the conclusions of the open space screening analysis included in the EAS. The guests attending the increased number of life-cycle events and weddings would not be expected to overburden any of the nearby public open spaces, because 1) it is unlikely that many such guests would spend time in nearby parks before, during, or after the events; and 2) even if guests were to visit the nearest open space, Central Park, the addition of these new park users would not overburden this large, regional park. The increase in the size and frequency of the Toddler Program would bring more children to CSI on a daily basis, but the total number of children served would remain small (approximately 60), and those children and the Toddler Program teachers would also not result in an overburdening of the open space at Central Park.
- **Shadows:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program does not alter the shape of the building analyzed in the EAS and therefore would not affect shadows cast by the building.
- **Historic Resources:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program does not alter the proposed New Building and therefore would not affect archaeological or architectural resources.
- **Urban Design and Visual Resources:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program does not alter the shape of the building analyzed in the EAS and therefore would not affect the conclusions of the screening analysis for urban design and visual resources included in the EAS.
- **Neighborhood Character:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not adversely affect neighborhood character. These program elements would not alter the proposed land use or the shape of the New Building. The increase in life-cycle events and weddings held at CSI with the new multi-function room would not result in significant adverse traffic impacts (see the discussion below). The increase in the size and frequency of the Toddler Program would bring more children to CSI on a daily basis, but the total number of children served would remain small (approximately 60).
- **Natural Resources:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not change the conclusions of the natural resources screening analysis in the EAS.
- **Hazardous Materials:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not change the conclusions of the natural resources screening analysis in the EAS.

- **Waterfront Revitalization:** As stated in the EAS, the project site is not located within the coastal zone and therefore the City’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Program does not apply.
- **Infrastructure:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not change the conclusion that the proposed action would not result in an exceptionally large demand for water, and therefore no assessment of water or sewer capacity is needed.
- **Solid Waste and Sanitation Services:** The September 2007 EAS provided an estimate of the solid waste generated as a result of the New Building, taking into account the new residents of the five proposed residential units and the new employees and students in the private school space to be included. These calculations did not account for the expanded Toddler Program or the increased number of events that would be held at CSI as a result of the addition of the multi-function room. A revised estimate of the solid waste generated as a result of the proposed action is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1
Solid Waste Generation**

New Use	Rate (lbs./week/ person)	People (per Week)	Solid Waste (lbs/week)
Residential	17	13	221
Community Facility Employees	13	50	650
Private School Students	4	165	660
Expanded Toddler Program	4	40	160
Multi-Function Room: Increased Events	2	180	360
TOTAL			2,051
<p>Note: Rates from <i>CEQR Technical Manual</i>, Table 3M-1. For the Toddler Program, the rate for elementary schools was used. For the events in the multi-function room, no rate is available in the CEQR Technical Manual; the solid waste rates used are those provided for catered events in the <i>American Museum of Natural History, Planetarium and North Side Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement</i>, 1996.</p>			

For the multi-function room, the estimates in Table 1 are based on an additional two events per month at the Synagogue (or 0.5 additional events per week). To be conservative, this estimate assumes full occupancy of the multi-function room (360 people), although attendance at the new events could be smaller.

The revised estimates of solid waste generation do not change the conclusions of the EAS, which are that this amount of waste represents a very small amount relative to the amounts of solid waste collected weekly on a given route for the Department of Sanitation and would not affect the City’s ability to provide trash collection services.

Please note that CSI is sensitive to concerns raised regarding trash removal following weddings and life cycle events at the Synagogue. As described in Friedman & Gotbaum’s December 28, 2007 letter, two alternatives for trash removal are being considered by CSI: (1) refrigerated storage of trash in the New Building’s trash room; and/or (2) removal of garbage by a private carter on the morning following each event.

- **Energy:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not change the conclusions of the energy screening analysis in the EAS.
- **Traffic and Parking:** As described above, the new multi-function room would result in an anticipated increase in events held at CSI. In total, an estimated 22 to 30 additional life-cycle events

and weddings would occur at CSI each year (two per month) in addition to the 32 to 51 such events currently held each year (three to four per month). The 10 to 15 additional life-cycle events (one per month) would typically be held on Saturdays during the Sabbath. Weddings would not occur during the Sabbath. The 12 to 15 additional weddings (one per month) would not occur during the Sabbath. They would typically be on Sundays, with a smaller number potentially on Saturday evenings or weekdays.

CSI is an Orthodox Synagogue; following the religious practices of an Orthodox Jews, people attending life-cycle events would not drive or ride in motor vehicles during the Sabbath, which occurs from just before sundown on Friday to after sundown on Saturday. Therefore, these life-cycle events would not be expected to result in increased vehicle traffic on Saturdays during any peak periods. For the one additional wedding per month, most would occur on Sundays, with a small number on Saturday nights or weekdays. When these additional events, the existing travel patterns in the immediate vicinity of CSI for events held today would occur more frequently. Since these trips would generally occur on weekends during off-peak periods when traffic is typically lighter, no significant adverse traffic impacts would be expected.

For the expanded Toddler Program, the increased frequency (from two weekdays days plus Tot Shabbat each week to five weekdays plus Tot Shabbat), expanded hours (from morning-only to whole day), and increase in number of children served (from 20 to 60) would not result in significant increases to vehicular traffic or parking demand in the area. Most children who attend the program would be anticipated to either live in the area or have parents who work in the area. Most parents or caregivers would therefore drop off the children on foot, and only a small increase in vehicular traffic, if any, would be expected during the peak hour.

- **Transit and Pedestrians:** The *CEQR Technical Manual* calls for an assessment of a project's effects on transit if 200 or more transit trips can be expected to occur during the peak hour as a result of a proposed action. This level of transit ridership during a peak hour would not be expected as a result of either the new events at the multi-function room or the expansion to the Toddler Program. For pedestrians, while there could be more than 200 event patrons an hour arriving at and departing from CSI, this level of activities exists currently and is limited to short durations and adjacent to the project site. Furthermore, these trips would generally occur on weekends when background pedestrian levels are typically lighter. Therefore, no significant adverse pedestrian impacts would be expected.
- **Air Quality:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not result in a substantial number of new vehicle trips during the peak hour, and therefore would not change the conclusions of the EAS with respect to air quality.
- **Noise:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program within the community facility space in the New Building would not result in a substantial number of new vehicle trips during the peak hour, and therefore would not change the conclusions of the EAS with respect to noise.
- **Construction:** The presence of the multi-function room and expanded Toddler Program does not alter the shape of the building analyzed in the EAS and therefore would not affect the construction activities or duration.

C. CONCLUSION

Although the EAS prepared in September 2007 analyzing the effects of the New Building did not specifically describe the increased frequency of events at CSI associated with the multi-function room or the expansion to the Toddler Program, further review of those two program elements demonstrates that their inclusion does not change the conclusions of the EAS.

We would be happy to provide additional information requested by the Board to assist in the review of the environmental effects of this proposal.

Sincerely,

AKRF, INC.



Julia P. Cowing, AICP
Senior Vice President

cc: S. Friedman, L. Cuisinier

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