



Park Avenue Synagogue

*A Synagogue in Action:
Building the Future*

Frequently Asked Questions

WHY DO WE NEED MORE SPACE?

On any given day, Park Avenue Synagogue is bursting at the seams. We need more/bigger classrooms for Young Families, Congregational School students and adult learners. We need more worship spaces and the ability to have the space fit the nature of the service. We have limited room to hold Shabbat services targeted at a specific group and limited sacred space to hold smaller services like baby namings. Often on Shabbat, we have hundreds of families worshipping in a nearby church or the local German cultural center. Our congregants feel, now more than ever, that PAS is a place to gather as a Jewish community, and our current physical infrastructure falls short of creating the type of setting desired. We also need more meeting rooms for varied types of meetings that are critically important to the continued operations of the institution and the building of our community. In summary, the analysis conducted by the architects in their year-long master planning study, concluded that we have a shortage of approximately 12,000 square feet.

ISN'T LACK OF SPACE JUST AN ISSUE ON THE HIGH HOLIDAYS?

Lack of space is most visible on the High Holidays—and this project won't solve that issue—but lack of space is a problem most days of the year. Classrooms are overcrowded and insufficient. Worship spaces and meeting rooms are inadequate and inflexible.

WHY CAN'T WE JUST ADD FLOORS TO THE EXISTING BUILDING?

After a thorough analysis of several expansion options by architects, it was determined that the existing 87th Street building could not support even one additional floor and would have to be completely gutted and reinforced—a project that would displace the entire community for a minimum of three years. The Board and leadership of the PAS community deemed this an unacceptable risk to our thriving community.

WAS SELLING THE AIR RIGHTS ABOVE 87TH STREET CONSIDERED?

Several of the options evaluated by the architects included selling the air rights and using part of the proceeds to add floor(s) to the existing building. As mentioned above, this would have meant a three year absence from the building and was deemed an unacceptable risk. The current option fully preserves the value of PAS's air rights and our ability to take advantage of them at some point in the future for future generations.

WHY DID THE BOARD DETERMINE THAT VACATING THE 87TH STREET BUILDING FOR THREE YEARS WAS UNACCEPTABLE—MAYBE IT'S A REASONABLE PRICE TO PAY TO SOLVE THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE?

The Space Needs Committee did a thorough analysis to understand options for temporary space. It became very clear that the synagogue staff, clergy and community would be forced to spread throughout the city as there is minimal space available near PAS to house large portions of our functions. For several programs, it was unclear whether a home could even be found for a three year period and some PAS functions might have to be suspended or held on an ad hoc basis were the building to be vacated. The Board and leadership of PAS felt strongly that sending our community in multiple directions to multiple facilities would put our community at risk.

WHY WOULDN'T WE JUST MOVE THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES TO A LESS EXPENSIVE LOCATION AND KEEP EVERYONE AT 87TH STREET?

Interaction between and among the professional staff, clergy, lay leaders and the community at large is integral to building and sustaining a vibrant community. Moving the administrative offices would seriously undermine this very important underpinning to the success of PAS. Additionally, the administrative offices do not take up a significant amount of space at PAS, and moving this would not solve the problem.

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WHY ISN'T THE ECC MOVING TO THE NEW BUILDING?

As part of the study done by the architects, it was understood the ECC community is pleased with its current space. Even so, for various code issues (for which we are currently grandfathered at our current location), the ECC would only be allowed to operate in the first three floors of the new building which would not fit all of our ECC classrooms; thus making it an unviable option.

WHY DOES THE 87TH STREET BUILDING NEED UPDATING?

Not only has the building not been substantially renovated in nearly 35 years and currently requires significant and growing capital expenditures for maintenance and repairs, but the dated look and feel is not particularly welcoming or attractive to congregants. Said simply, the current physical infrastructure of the existing PAS building has fallen way behind the vibrant culture of our community.

HAVE YOU PLANNED FOR THE INCREASED OPERATING COSTS INVOLVED WITH OPERATING A SECOND BUILDING?

No extraordinary assessments are anticipated in order to meet the project budgets. The incremental operating expenses will be part of a detailed budget process where new and existing expense increases will be minimized.

HOW WILL WE MAKE SURE WE REMAIN ONE COMMUNITY?

An important focus of the design and ultimately PAS programming will be to have a “one campus” approach. Specifically, Young Families and Congregational School Students will remain connected to the 87th Street building through special Shabbat services throughout the existing PAS building as well as targeted programming to bring everyone together. Adults will be connected to the new building through Adult Learning classes and activities throughout the day thus ensuring a mix of communities in both buildings.

HOW WILL WE MAKE SURE THE CHILDREN WILL FEEL LIKE 87TH STREET IS “HOME” TOO?

Through a “one campus” approach, programming will be integrated across both buildings. PAS will consciously seek to bring students from the Lifelong Learning Center to 87th Street so that they are as familiar with and feel as comfortable as possible at 87th Street. Children will be coming to Shabbat services in the 87th Street sanctuary when they do not have their own programs.

ARE WE SEEKING TO ENLARGE THE CONGREGATION?

We have no plans to diverge from our current approach to membership. Currently, we welcome new members but do not actively recruit. We are pursuing this campaign to meet the needs of our current community which has become more and more involved.

THIS IS A LOT OF MONEY TO SPEND. WILL THE IMPACT REALLY BE WORTH THE COST?

While the goal is large, it is the sum of two significant projects—purchasing and renovating the new building and renovating and reinforcing the 87th Street building. We anticipate that once completed, the community will benefit from a vastly upgraded, 21st century campus that will enable us to fulfill our sacred mission.

WILL THIS PROJECT UNDERMINE PAS'S STRONG FINANCIAL CONDITION?

One of the attractive aspects of the project is that it is stage-able and modular. Portions of the project could be delayed without significant impact if the Campaign took longer than anticipated or fell short of its goals.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE CAMPAIGN FALLS SHORT OF ITS TARGETS?

One of the most attractive aspects of the project is that it can be done in phases. So modules can be postponed without impacting the whole if our goals take longer to achieve.

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WON'T THE CAMPAIGN CANNIBALIZE OTHER FUNDRAISING NEEDED FOR CONTINUING ANNUAL OPERATIONS?

This is a risk of which we must all be mindful. In the appeals, we are stressing that gifts to the Capital Campaign should be considered only after maintaining or enhancing congregants' commitments to annual fundraising efforts.

WILL RABBI COSGROVE'S TIME BE DEDICATED TO FUNDRAISING?

Rabbi Cosgrove's leadership is very important to the Campaign particularly with respect to articulating the vision for our future and how this project enhances PAS. However, his first responsibility is and always will be serving the current congregation with all the dedication we have come to expect from him. In addition, he has the support of Rabbis Zuckerman and Witkovsky and Cantor Schwartz.

IS PAS AT RISK OF LOSING TOUCH WITH THE COMMUNITY AND TURNING INTO TOO MUCH OF AN INSTITUTION?

As a community gets more and more involved, processes and procedures need to be institutionalized to ensure that congregants are treated in a warm and welcoming fashion. Additionally, more staff is needed to maintain the personal touch we have come to expect. Our goal is to make sure that the institution can endure the departures or retirement of professional staff without incident. This professionalization of PAS has been evolving over a period of many years. We do not anticipate that the Capital Campaign will "over-institutionalize" us at the expense of the community feel. In reality, we hope the project will match the physical infrastructure we operate in with the dynamic culture of our community.

WILL THE CAMPAIGN OVERSHADOW EVERYTHING ELSE WHILE IT IS ONGOING?

While the Campaign is a major focus for the congregation for the next two years, we are committed to making sure that everything that currently happens continues so as to preserve the involvement and engagement of our community.

HOW WILL YOU GUARD AGAINST AN AGGRESSIVE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN HARMING THE INCLUSIVE SPIRIT OF THE COMMUNITY?

The goal of this project is to have the entire community feel the pride and joy of securing our synagogue's future. While we will need significant lead gifts, there will be a strong emphasis on participation to the best of one's ability. So that we can all come together as a community with a common goal.

HOW CAN PAS TAKE ON THIS EXPANSION PLAN IN LIGHT OF THE PEW STUDY CONCLUSIONS?

While we haven't "cracked the code" on how to stimulate the uninspired or attract the disengaged, our congregation is thriving. By seeking to meet people where they are and providing multiple portals of entry, our congregants are becoming more involved in our community and more engaged with Jewish life and learning. We hope to further the quest for how to live Jewishly in a 21st century secular society.

WHAT IF OUR GROWTH DOESN'T CONTINUE?

The Space Needs investigation was a function of deeper involvement by our current members, not growth in our overall membership. The need for additional space and renovation exists independent of further growth. In the worst case, the synagogue would have the new building as an asset in an extremely attractive part of Manhattan which could be sold in the future if absolutely necessary.

WHAT IF THE CURRENT CLERGY MOVES ON?

While we recognize that our growth and success is in large part a result of our current clergy, it is incumbent upon us to support an institution that lives on beyond one set of leaders. PAS has an illustrious 130+ year history that has gone from strength to strength. Rabbis Steinberg, Nadich, Lincoln and Cosgrove and Cantors Putterman, Lefkowitz, Abramson and Schwartz have literally taken us from generation to generation. We look forward to many more generations to follow.

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MY KIDS ARE GROWN, WHY SHOULD I CONTRIBUTE TO THIS CAMPAIGN?

Just as we and our children benefitted from the foresight and generosity of prior generations, it is incumbent upon us to pave the way for the future. This is about creating a dynamic congregation that future generations will want to participate in—including, hopefully, our grandchildren. Moreover, the Campaign is about more than just our children, many of the changes focus on adult learners, adult worship and community building.

WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO PAS WHEN I AM NO LONGER IN THE GENERATIONS WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THE RENOVATION?

In every generation, Jews have stepped up to meet the opportunities and challenges of the hour. We have benefitted from those who have come before us. As stakeholders in a shared tradition, it is now our responsibility to “pay it forward.”

WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO PAS WHEN MY CHILDREN’S SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES ARE A PRIORITY?

As important as our children’s schools are to support, the day may come when they are no longer such a primary focus of a family’s philanthropy. As the only institution present through the course of a person’s life, literally from cradle to grave, the synagogue is a differentiated place in the life of an American Jew because it reminds us of the person we want to be and the world we want to create. A gift to PAS is a gift to our Jewish community that can last many decades and be passed from generation to generation.

I PLAN TO PARTICIPATE BUT WHY SHOULD I STRETCH BEYOND MY COMFORT ZONE?

That’s great! Thank you! While your gift can be paid over five years, it will impact your family and Park Avenue Synagogue for generations. We haven’t held a campaign of this magnitude in nearly 35 years. Since we are unlikely to hold another campaign for quite a while, we hope you will consider your future giving capacity and pull some of that forward. In essence, a gift can be thought of as having a multi-decade life payable over five years.

CAN I MAKE A PLANNED GIFT?

The Campaign would be delighted to receive a planned gift including through the receipt of a bequest in a will, designation as the beneficiary of an IRA, life insurance policy or charitable trust. Please contact Laura Yamner, Director of Development, at lyamner@pasyn.org or 212-369-4900, x138 to discuss these opportunities in greater detail.

ARE CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES AVAILABLE?

Yes! Park Avenue Synagogue is participating in UJA’s Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) Program. With a CGA, you have the opportunity to lock in a high fixed rate of return for life, and the potential for immediate tax deductions while making a lasting impact on Park Avenue Synagogue. Because annuity payments begin at age 65, a CGA can be a useful retirement planning vehicle. For those younger than 65, a deferred CGA may be established to yield potential immediate tax deductions, as well as retirement security for the future. Please contact Laura Yamner, Director of Development, at lyamner@pasyn.org or 212-369-4900, x138 to discuss these opportunities in greater detail.

WILL MY GIFT BE RECOGNIZED?

All gifts to the campaign will be recognized, with the donor’s permission, on a wall plaque and in publications as determined by the Campaign Steering Committee. In addition, gifts of \$100,000 or more will be eligible for specific naming opportunities available throughout the two buildings.

HOW CAN I HELP?

We hope that you will embrace the vision of the Campaign and make a gift that is meaningful to you and your family—and a bit of a stretch. Most importantly, we seek broad participation and welcome a gift at whatever level is comfortable for you. Should you wish to volunteer on behalf of the Campaign, please contact Andrea Baumann Lustig at andrea.lustig@stralem.com or Laura Yamner, Director of Development, at lyamner@pasyn.org or 212-369-4900, x138.