



Cathedral Church of St. John receives \$1.5 million for Synod Hall renovations

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Exterior of Synod Hall at The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Photo Credit: Brian Kutner

Manhattan, NY The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine has received \$1.5 million in city funding to support a larger capital campaign to renovate Synod Hall, a historic building on the Cathedral's 11-acre campus. With the support of New York City council including speaker Adrienne Adams and city council member Shaun Abreu, the Cathedral's goal is to transform Synod Hall into a larger community hub of Cathedral Community Cares (CCC), the Cathedral's social service arm, whose mission is to combat and alleviate poverty through preventative poverty services, education and advocacy – specifically focusing on issues of health and hunger.

Originally built in 1913 by J.P. Morgan as a convention space for the Episcopal Church, Synod Hall was designed in the French Gothic style by noted architects Ralph Adams Cram and Frank Ferguson. This renovation will preserve the building's beauty and historical character, while dramatically increasing its usefulness as a community space. City funding will be focused on the building's lower level, equipping it to host a soup kitchen, food pantry, laundry facilities, social work counseling services, and other resources. The first phase of its renovation will include installing handicapped access (including ADA-compliant access off the entrance on 110th St.), pantry facilities, ADA-compliant bathrooms, laundry machines, and a flexible space for indoor soup kitchen dining, community meetings and events. Future work will include a commercial kitchen and an

elevator between the basement and ground floors to improve accessibility.

“Cathedral Community Cares’ mission of combatting poverty, alleviating hunger, and advancing public health for New Yorkers is crucial for our city,” said Adams. “I’m proud to have worked with council member Shaun Abreu and our council colleagues to secure \$1.5 million to renovate the historic Synod Hall into a community hub for upper Manhattan. This center at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and others like it are critical to building a safe and healthy city, and we must continue investing in their maintenance and expansion. I look forward to seeing the positive impact of this investment for years to come.”

“When it comes to getting resources to those who need it most, the Cathedral of St John the Divine does a lot with a little space. This \$1.5 million investment in Synod Hall will take the vital work they do to the next level, allowing for increased wellness and social services. I couldn’t be more excited to break ground on this project and support this new community hub as it uplifts Morningside Heights and all of Upper Manhattan for years to come,” said Abreu. “Scripture tells us ‘to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.’ This is the driving force behind this renovation: to make sure no one goes unserved on our watch.”

“At Cathedral Community Cares, we saw over 35,000 visitors last year, and we expect that number to only grow. New Yorkers from all walks of life are finding themselves in dire need of food, clothing, and access to social services,” said The Reverend Canon Eva Suarez, M.Div., M.S.W of The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine. “Our current space is just too small to serve the diverse needs of our clients, or to welcome everyone who would like to volunteer. We want to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and Council Member Shaun Abreu for this incredible support, which will help to allow us to move our CCC operations into a larger space, create a much-needed community hub, and improve our ability to feed and clothe more people.”

CCC has been in operation for nearly 40 years, serving New York City and its West Harlem/Morningside Heights community. Hosting four main programs, CCC provides weekly hot meals, a clothing closet, a food pantry/community fridge, as well as a weekly food pantry run in partnership with the Plentiful program. Clients are approximately 40% regular and 60% new/temporary visitors, including those New Yorkers who are low income, street homeless or insecurely housed, families, seniors, and people newly arrived in the United States.

“It’s a privilege to do this work,” said Thomas Perry, program director of Cathedral Community Cares. “Every morning, we get to come in and do everything we can to help other people, to make a positive difference in the world. Not everyone gets to do that. But that also means expansion is the next step. If we want to keep serving others, helping everyone who comes to us and not turning anyone away, we need to tackle this project of Synod Hall.”

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