

**CITY OF BAYONNE  
SITE PLAN REFERRAL  
AND  
REQUEST FOR RECOMMENDATION**  
**\*\*\*E-mail will be sent with One-Drive electronic file share\*\*\***

Joseph Benkert  
Building Construction Official

Date: January 2, 2026  
Application: P-25-037

Joseph Coughlin  
Fire Sub-Code Official

Applicant: JOHN AND MARYAN LLC  
1012-1022 Avenue C and  
53-57 West 48<sup>th</sup> Street  
Block 64, Lots 2 and 3

Joseph Ryan  
Historic Preservation Commission

Jessica Connors  
Tax Assessor

Greg Avalesi  
City Engineer

Attorney for Applicant:  
Michael Miceli

Planning Board

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Application and site plan for your consideration.

The Administrator has placed the matter on the agenda for the meeting of March 10, 2026

Please provide your comments by: January 15, 2026

January 29, 2026

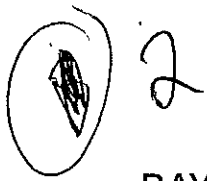
COMMENTS: (Use separate sheet if necessary)

THERE IS A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE GOING ON  
BETWEEN THE DEVELOPER, PEOPLE IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY,  
AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PEOPLE ABOUT SAVING WINDOWS  
AND OTHER OBJECTS FROM THE SYNAGOGUE. THERE ARE  
SOME PROPOSALS FOR PLACING HISTORIC PLAQUES AND

Dated: 1/28/2026

Signed: Joseph E Ryan

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SYNAGOGUE IN THE NEW BUILDING.  
I HAVE ATTACHED A STATEMENT FROM DR. RENEE LHERON  
O'LEARY, WHO GREW UP IN THE SYNAGOGUE, SHE HAD  
INTENDED TO SPEAK TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION ON JANUARY 27, THAT MEETING WAS  
CANCELLED ON ACCOUNT OF THE SNOW. PLEASE ENCOURAGE  
THE DEVELOPER TO SAVE WINDOWS AND OTHER OBJECTS BEFORE  
DEVELOPMENT TAKES PLACE.



## BAYONNE REDEVELOPMENT HEARING

February 19, 2025, Bayonne City Hall, 630 Avenue C and 28<sup>th</sup> Street

6 PM—Re: Ohav Sholom Synagogue

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Good evening:

Thank you for recognizing me to speak.

My name is Renée Cherow-O'Leary. I live in Manhattan but I grew up in Bayonne. My parents, Eli and Marianne Cherow, and my grandparents, Manya and Abraham Cherow, owned a hardware/housewares store that was well known in Bayonne on 50<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, 1017 Broadway to be exact. The store was in business from 1923 to 1985, a 62 year run. Neighbors, customers, salesmen pervaded my childhood as a part of the operation of the store. I attended Horace Mann School and Bayonne High School and the synagogue in which my family found its home was Ohav Sholom, the Uptown Synagogue. At that time there were several synagogues in Bayonne and a thriving Jewish Community Center. The Uptown Synagogue was the elegantly built Orthodox Synagogue directly across the street from the beautiful campus of St. Vincent's Church on Avenue C between 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Streets, the synagogue that I know is planned to be torn down by this council. And it is that special place, a very emotional place for me, that I would like to speak about for a few minutes today. I want to bear witness to its existence in the history of Bayonne and to its importance, a swirling hub of life, people like my grandparents who were immigrants, some from persecution, some to make a new life, some who had been in Holocaust concentration camps, but all who had a zest for life, a strong faith that was celebrated in beautiful cantorial song and a

rabbinic family that led it with kindness and commitment for many, many years. Ohav Sholom, the name of the shul, another word for synagogue, means “Love of Peace” in Hebrew. And I’d like you to imagine it as it was then.

The original building was constructed in 1915 at cost of \$35,000 with a school to follow in 1928, according to an article veteran Bayonne reporter, Al Sullivan, wrote in an article about the plans for redevelopment in 2023. So at this juncture it is 110 years old! But here is the picture I have in my mind’s eye: there are gracious steps from the street to the entrance doors on both sides of the building with a curving fence that protects the façade. One inside there is another set of steps covered in carpeting. It is for the women who sit upstairs separate from the men in a balcony surrounding the entire circumference of the building. The men enter directly into the sanctuary from the central doors as soon as you come into the building. There are pews through facing the ark, the place where the Torah, the Jewish sacred book, is housed in its velvet covering and silver crowns that are taken off when it is being read. There are stained glass windows honoring members of the congregation (including a window in honor of my grandparents). The rabbi and the president of the congregation sit in chairs on what is called the “bima” which is a slightly elevated stage higher than the pews and the bima is where the cantor also sings the prayers to which the congregation joins in. On high holidays like Rosh Hashana, the new year, and Yom Kippur, a time of atonement and special blessings, the cantor wears a pure white wool garment with satin trim and not a regular yarmulka or head covering which all men wear when they pray but a beautiful satin covered round hat with a pom-pom. It is festive, it is ancient, it is meant for special respect to God as all the head coverings are.

The aisles to the Bima are covered in a patterned carpet and people can be called up for blessings. The women sit above. Technically, they are supposed to sit behind a curtain that can be moved back and forth so the women and men will not be distracted by each other. But, I am happy to tell you, no one at Ohav Sholom obeyed the rule of the “mechitzah,” the curtain. You could look down and wave at your father, eye a boy who you knew from school, and watch all the holy and festive events unfolding below from the balcony.

But there was something that the women had close to them, also symbolic and exquisite. The ceiling of the building! It was painted turquoise and gold and on it was the depiction of all of the signs of the astrological symbols of the Zodiac with all of their concomitant signs—a bull for Taurus, a crab for Cancer, a Lion for Leo and so on. It was a beautiful array of the heavens that shone down on the synagogue goers, a watchful reminder that Heaven and Earth were meeting in this place.

I have many stories to tell about this synagogue and I am currently writing a few of them for a long article or essay about Ohav Sholom and its meaning. How some of the older women, some in fur coats of yesteryear, used smelling salts so they wouldn't faint on the fast days, how the members of the congregation would make special contributions by raising their hands as if at an auction and their names would be called out (what do you bid, Mr. Pashalinsky?), how the rebbetzin, the rabbi's wife would watch him intently when he gave his sermons, and how the cantor's wife, Sylvia, would bang the rim of the balcony when her beloved husband, Chiel, would sing solo. Sha, Shtill, she would say. Be Quiet! Be Quiet! Sylvia and Chiel were both Holocaust survivors. They met after both their families had been killed. They loved each other fiercely and they prayed with equal intensity.

As a little girl, I felt that intensity. There was magic in the shul. I don't think I knew how to express it then. The glow of the ceiling, my family--grandmother and mother and sister above, grandfather and father below. I had my sweet sixteen party in the open room in the room that was at street level and part of the shul's common rooms for refreshments after services. The shul mattered to me. It touched my heart. And that is why I came from Manhattan today to tell you that the drawings of buildings that seem to be planned to replace that block do not do its memory justice. They do not honor the rich history of Bayonne and that particular beautiful and sacred place that was left to fall into ruin for over 20 years.

I am not an architect nor am I able to offer you funds to restore the shul. It could be done. In my vision, Ohav Sholom could be a meeting center for community gatherings or even more specially in my view, it could be restored as a community theater for Bayonne. The balcony, the bima, the pews below could be made into a wonderful site of performances--dance, music, plays, musicians, and perhaps student classes and recitals. It has infinite potential with imaginative leadership. I urge you to reconsider the beauty of this historic building and not the shell it is now and revitalize it for the good of Bayonne and for historical reasons as well. Another non-descript housing project does not do the site justice if you will forgive me for saying so. What I do think is the property next door, the larger building and its land could be used for housing that would connect to the artistry of the original Ohav Sholom building. And it would be memorable piece of architecture that could endure for years as a unified development of old and new.

Thank you so much for listening to my reminiscences of a time and place that holds deep emotion for me and I hope I have been able to transmit a bit of this to you. There is an historic church on the Upper West Side, West Park, on Amsterdam Avenue and 86<sup>th</sup> Street, that was built in the 1890's that was going to be sold and torn down and now actors like Matt Damon, Mark Ruffalo and others in the neighborhood and a dedicated band of volunteers, artists and community members are bringing it back to life in the most wonderful way. I could see a future like this for Ohav Sholom if the Bayonne artistic community could envision possibilities for a new life for the next generation and the next century. If that is too ambitious, then I hope there will be ways discussed to honor this site with a plaque of some sort or with incorporating some of its physical elements of the synagogue into whatever new project is built in its place.

I appreciate your kind attention and am happy to answer any questions.