PROJECT DATA

Project Name: Restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue on the Lower East Side
Location: 12 Eldridge Street, New York, NY 10002
Owner: Kahal Adath Jeshurun mit Anshe Lubz
Project Use(s) Non-sectarian cultural and educational center for the general public; Jewish synagogue for worship
Project Size: 10,000 sq. ft.
Total Development cost: $18.5 million
Annual Operating Budget: $2 million for the Museum at Eldridge Street
Date Initiated: 1986
Percent completed by December 1, 2008: 100%
Project Completion date: December 3, 2007

Application submitted by:
Name: Bonnie Dimun, Executive Director; Michael Weinstein, Board Chairman
Organization: Museum at Eldridge Street
Address: 12 Eldridge Street, New York, NY 10002
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Fax: 212-966-4782
Grant contact: Eva Bruné, Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Tel/Email: 212-219-0888 ext. 202 // ebrune@eldridgestreet.org

Key Participants:

Public Agencies:
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NYC Department of Design & Construction // Hilda Schneider // (718) 391-1018 // schneider@ddc.nyc.gov
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation // Merrill Hesch // (212) 866-2599 // hesch@oprhp.state.ny.us

Developer:
Eldridge Street Project, Inc. (now called the Museum at Eldridge Street) // Roberta Brandes Gratz, Founder and Bonnie Dimun, Executive Director // (212) 219-0888 ext. 204 // bdimun@eldridgestreet.org // livingcity@aol.com

Professional Consultant:
Evergreene Painting Studios (Contract completed December 2007) // Jeffrey Greene // (212) 244-2800 // jgreene@evergreene.com

Architect/Designer:
Architects: (Contract completed December 2007) Walter Sedovic Associates “Jill Gotthelf, Walter Sedovic // (914) 591-1900 // gibrwalter@modernruins.com

Community Representatives:
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The Lower East Side Conservancy // Laurie Tobias-Cohen // (212) 374-4100 // info@nycjewishtours.org

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (Check all that apply)

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Signature: [Signature]
ABSTRACT

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name: Museum at Eldridge Street

Address: 12 Eldridge Street
City/State/ZIP: New York, NY 10002

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals.

The restoration and adaptive re-use of the historic Eldridge Street Synagogue was a twenty-year, $18.5 million preservation and community development project. The first great house of worship built as a synagogue by East European Jews on the Lower East Side of Lower Manhattan (NYC), the grand building, now a New York City and National Historic Landmark, anchors the neighborhood and provides a site for community cultural and educational activities. The Synagogue is one of the most significant religious structures in this country. Completed in 1887, it was the first great house of worship built in the United States by Eastern European Jews, from whom more than four-fifths of American Jews descend. The immigrant founders, escaping persecution in Europe, expressed their new-found religious freedom with a bold architectural statement, blending Moorish, Gothic, and Romanesque elements in a brilliant synthesis of traditional religious symbols and decorative motifs. The handsome, brightly illuminated house of worship, set amid the Lower East Side’s tenements, factories and shops, offered a refuge from the dark, cramped spaces in which parishioners lived and worked. It strikingly symbolizes the experience of countless newcomers to America—both Jewish and non-Jewish, of yesterday and today—who grapple with the tension between cultural continuity and change. Cultural awareness programs at the site provide exposure to Jewish customs and traditions, reveal historic links among world religions, and offer opportunities to dispel stereotypes. For Jewish visitors, a trip to Eldridge Street provides an enriching connection to heritage and a vehicle for strengthened commitment. Collaborations with artists have allowed the project to interpret the dynamic building in novel and enriching ways. And the restoration is itself a rich and distinctive context for programs; for the historic preservation effort is used as a metaphor for cultural preservation in all its forms. The building is now used by neighborhood and local community organizations for myriad events, by the newly named Museum at Eldridge Street as a site for cultural and educational programs serving the community, and by a small congregation which uses the building for Shabbat and holiday services.

2. Why does the project merit the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

The Eldridge Street Synagogue is the most important artifact of Eastern European Jewish religious life in America. The vast majority of these immigrants entered the country through New York’s Lower East Side, permanently transforming New York City into an international Jewish capital. New York housed, and continues to house, the largest Jewish population of any city in the world. Under the auspices of the Eldridge Street Project, now renamed the Museum at Eldridge Street, which worked to restore the building to its original grandeur, and the congregation Kahal Adath Jeshurun mit Anshe Lubz, today the Eldridge Street Synagogue is both a continuing house of worship and a cultural center used by the whole community. Our Lower East Side neighborhood remains a haven for new immigrants, and the Eldridge Street Synagogue building is a neighborhood hub for cultural and educational activities which reflect and illustrate how immigrants construct new identities in this country while maintaining an identity deeply rooted in personal history and memory. Today, the Synagogue’s presence in a richly textured, multi-ethnic neighborhood and its weekly Sabbath services offer continued testimony to the principles of ethnic diversity and religious freedom upon which this nation was founded. The Synagogue’s restoration and adaptation as a cultural and educational hub has transformed our Lower East Side neighborhood, setting the stage for additional preservation and restoration of other buildings in this neighborhood. The Lower East Side is now synonymous with New York City history, particularly immigrant history, and the preservation and restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue begun more than twenty years ago, stands testament to the driving power of preservation as an important component of urban development.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

Any successful preservation project, and especially one of the magnitude and historic importance of the Eldridge Street Synagogue, must be based on a set of principles to guide the restoration. The central concept of this unique restoration was to conserve what original fabric of the building that still exists. The original splendor is restored without ever looking "new." Missing fabric is filled in to look like it was always there but is subtly different from the original so that infill is not confused with original fabric. Some layers of change over time are preserved throughout the building to help tell the story of the building and the people who used it. Any missed or rotted fabric, i.e. century-old beams, that had to be replaced were replaced with equally old, recycled material. The little new material that was needed was also made of recycled products. The "greening" aspects of our project distinguished it from other preservation projects nationwide. Another underlying principle was that the restored building should continue to be used for its originally intended purpose whenever possible. A small, but active congregation, founded in the 1850s and responsible for erecting the building in 1887, has never missed a Shabbat service. We also strove to ensure that new programmatic and community requirements would be accommodated with a minimum of disturbance to the historic fabric. Restoration plans for the Eldridge Street Synagogue always included facilities and activities unrelated to the building's function as a place of worship. The Museum at Eldridge Street is a non-sectarian, not-for-profit art and history museum charged with maintaining the National Historic Landmark Eldridge Street Synagogue on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and presenting cultural and educational programs explore Lower East Side/New York City immigrant and community history, architectural preservation, and American-Jewish history and culture. We partner extensively with a variety of community organizations on cultural and educational programs; and these groups use the building extensively for their activities. There were no significant trade-offs required to implement the project.

2. How has the project impacted the local community?

The project has helped revitalize the Lower East Side, an historic immigrant neighborhood located in Lower Manhattan. More than 30,000 visitors to the site now patronize local amenities such as parking garages, restaurants, hotels, and shops, increasing business to this poverty-stricken neighborhood of Lower Manhattan which was economically and socially devastated after 9/11/01. The project helped bring visitorship to the neighborhood, having a substantial impact on local businesses. The site and neighborhood also serve as an important educational and cultural hub. In addition to more than 60 cultural programs offered during the past year, Eldridge Street has received major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities to host adult education and teacher professional development workshops on-site. Significantly, more than 500 teachers from across the country applied for 100 slots to participate in our summer 2008 Landmarks of the American Spirit one-week teacher professional development workshops led by some of the country's leading Jewish history and immigrant history scholars. Thousands of NYC public school children, including a huge percentage of recent immigrants, visit the site to learn about New York City history and immigration. Our Lower East Side walking tours and annual festivals, including the Egg Rolls & Egg Creams Festival, attract thousands of residents and visitors each year. Recognition of this extraordinary building and increased visitorship to our immigrant neighborhood was enhanced by the project's receipt of important preservation awards, including the 2008 National Preservation Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation; the 2008 Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy; the Preservation League of New York's 2008 Best Restoration Award; Municipal Art Society's Masterwork Award for "New York City's Best Restoration Project for 2007"; and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation 2008 Project Achievement Award.
3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

The project’s planning and development involved a process of collaboration among the building’s congregational owners, the volunteers (and eventually staff) of the Eldridge Street Project, public officials at both the local and state levels, foundation representatives, neighborhood community group and business leaders, building contractors, New York Landmarks commission, and other conservation specialists. The final development scheme which emerged from this process reflects the integration of goals and ideas from each of these stakeholders and experts. The Lower East Side Business Improvement District (LES-BID) helped galvanize the community in the early years, and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation was a key supporter, both financially and in terms of community development, in the latter years following 9/11/01. The fact that there was so much "common ground" among the people involved greatly facilitated the process and has resulted in what we believe has been a strong design and community-building project. Local artists and writers, who have lived in the neighborhood for decades, have been featured in our programs and advise staff on programmatic activities. More than 50 volunteers annually have been trained and serve as docents for tours of the site; most of these volunteers are from the neighborhood and represent all ethnicities.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

More than 18,000 individuals, businesses and foundations provided the $18.5 million needed to restore and outfit the building. The initial rescue and emergency stabilization of the building was accomplished in 1983-1984 at a cost of $93,000. Emergency funding was provided by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation with Federal Job Development Act funds, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, the New York Landmarks conservancy, the Lower East Side Merchants Association, and a small group of individual donors. Over the 20 year project period, we received $7.8 million from government sources, including four New York City Department of Cultural Affairs contracts (representing funding from the Mayor's Office, Manhattan Borough President's Office, and New York City Council); five contracts from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; and a Save America's Treasures grant from the U.S. National Parks Service. Senior citizens living on social security checks sent $1 by mail; churches and synagogues raised funds through drives at their organizations; visitors donated through on-site "pushkes" (charity boxes). It took a long time to raise the money and finish the project. But, there was actually great value in the length of time this project took. We were breaking so much new ground that if we had had all the money up front we would have damaged the building and not built the international support we now enjoy. The public loved seeing the building in its deteriorated condition, loved feeling the ghosts of history, loved discovering it before it got refurbished. People come back now and boast having seen it "when." Whatever their contribution was, small or large financial gift or participation in one of our Clean and Shine programs, they feel a sense of ownership and pride. That is a very special quality we enjoy. Square foot costs were $1,850.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

The most significant urbanist aspect of this project is that it demonstrates how a significant landmark dating from one period can be restored amidst the changing neighborhood, in turn serving as a landmark community site that revitalizes the entire neighborhood. The project is unique in that it galvanized an entire multi-cultural community to learn and use historic preservation as a means to provide greatly needed services to our low-income, immigrant neighborhood. People from throughout the nation donated more than $18.5 million in funds in order to preserve their memories and heritage through the Eldridge Street Initiative, and today the building is both a museum and a site for community gathering, as well as a functioning religious site. The entire immigrant community came together to raise funds, make preservation decisions, create cultural and educational programming that offers neighborhood artists and writers of all backgrounds a chance to be heard within their own community, and to establish locally-based educational interpretative center that celebrates the rich history of our traditionally immigrant neighborhood. This model is adaptable to other urban settings in that it uses historic preservation as an anchor by which to revitalize communities both economically and culturally. As the first historic preservation project in this neighborhood, now ripe with historic preservation initiatives, the Eldridge Street Synagogue's restoration has created a new destination for tourists and other visitors, who now frequent the neighborhood's many small family-owned restaurants and businesses. This project demonstrates that the genuine neighborhood becomes a significant teaching tool not only for the museum, but by the myriad cultural and educational groups that use our site to engage in a creative and open conversation about immigration.
**DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE**

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This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Roberta Brandes Gratz</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Museum at Eldridge Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>12 Eldridge Street</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(212) 966-4762</td>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>Founder, the Eldridge Street Project</td>
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**Signature**

1. What role did you or your company play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement.

Our organization, the Eldridge Street Project (now Museum at Eldridge Street) did not exist before I was brought to see this building in December 1982 and decided the building must be saved. I had written extensively about historic preservation but had never been involved in a specific project. A friend brought me to see if the building was worth spending the rest of our lives (my life) saving. I felt that if we didn't save this synagogue, we would have to reinvent it some day because without it you can not tell the story of American Jews nor this important chapter of New York City and American history in as rich a way. Four-fifths of American Jews can trace their ancestry through the Lower East Side which, at the turn of the 20th century, was the largest Jewish community in the world. The Lower East Side has always been an immigrant neighborhood, and the Eldridge Street Synagogue was the first great house of worship built as a synagogue by the great wave of East European Jews on the Lower East Side.

I had no idea it would be so difficult to get people to understand and support this effort. But as like-minded people joined the effort and as word and understanding spread, step by step we gained the recognition and support necessary to bring it this far. For more than a decade, it was managed strictly by community volunteers. Today, a nine-member full-time staff oversees more than 60 cultural and educational programs annually, attracting 30,000 visitors.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project?

Remarkably, there were no trade-offs. That is one of the reasons this project took so long. It took years to get people to truly understand the value of what was going on here. It had never been done on this scale, with a landmark in this condition or with a project not affiliated with a substantial institution. We almost compromised the integrity of the building early on because our first architect created a plan that would have actually removed some of the historic fabric in an "adaptive reuse" plan. But when we realized this, we switched architects, lost some supporters, moved on and, in some ways, started over again to find support. The community rallied around this project over the years, with more than 18,000 people donating from $1 to $1 million to realize the project. Even during the long period of restoration, the site was always open to the public for concerts, literary events, and festivals, attracting thousands of people to "see the work in progress." Twice a year, we held "community clean and shine days" and hundreds of local residents would come to sweep, dust, wash, and polish the various elements to keep the building clean, safe and available for public activities.
3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used?

The project received a broad base of support, with more than 18,000 individuals, businesses, and foundations donating the $18.5 million needed to complete the building's restoration and outfitting of the building as a cultural and educational center. Unique to the dual-purpose use of the building as a non-sectarian cultural center and functioning Jewish religious site, the City of New York, States of New York, and federal government recognized the distinct separate functions of the building, and, in turn, provided more than $7.8 million combined to the building's restoration for general public use. Government funding included four City contracts; five state grants; and a Save America's Treasures grant from the U.S. National Parks Service. The largest grant was $1 million from a Museum at Eldridge Street board member; the smallest was $1 sent annually by the elderly and children. Numerous churches and synagogues solicited funds from their members and, in turn, sent these combined donations to the project. Visitors to the site donated through the "pushkes" (charity boxes) on site and through the mail.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of the project?

The project had several unanticipated impacts on the community. When this project started in 1983, few people - Jews and non-Jews alike - really knew that any of the historic Lower East Side, the cradle of East European immigration in the late 19th and early 20th century, existed. Most uptown New Yorkers thought it was either totally a slum or totally Chinatown. Neither was true.

Thus, the project not only brought attention to a significant district reflecting critical New York and American history (4/5 of American Jews came through the Lower East Side) but it demonstrated an added level of significance. That added level was that one could observe and understand the larger American immigrant process by seeing the old area being occupied by the newer immigrant population, repeating in so many ways the absorption process experienced by the first group.

In addition, this project gave new meaning to the remnants of Lower East Side history that were neither valued by the local population or the public beyond. Local residents value their own history in a new way after observing the evolution of our project. New efforts to preserve significant landmarks of the area were initiated by local stakeholders, inspired by this project. And attention was brought to bear from near and far on all the local groups and their individual efforts.

One of the most successful aspects of the project has been the level of involvement from the local Chinese community. The project helped bring attention to a gritty and appealing neighborhood when others were getting too expensive, putting the spotlight on the neighborhood. Local businesses and restaurants clearly benefit from the increased number of visitors. Our cultural programming includes Chinese-language and arts, as well as the languages and cultural arts of various other immigrant groups of the Lower East Side, attracting a very diverse audience. For example, our annual Egg Rolls & Egg Creams Festival - taking place on our street outside and inside throughout the building - attracted more than 4,500 residents and visitors last June. This year's attendance for tours and programs totalled more than 30,000 visitors.
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name Peg Breen  
Title President

Organization The New York Landmarks Conservancy  
Telephone (212) 995-5260

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Fax (212) 995-5268  
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Signature

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

The New York Landmarks Conservancy's involvement with the Museum at Eldridge Street dates from the project's inception in the 1980's, with two low-interest loans in 1984 and 1986, to help finance initial building stabilization projects. The Conservancy also provided early technical advice on the restoration, and a series of 6 matching grants between 1991 and 2005. In 1996 the Conservancy supported Eldridge Street's application to the World Monuments Watch Fund. In 2008 the Conservancy awarded the Museum at Eldridge Street its highest honor, a Lucy Moses award. Over the last 20+ years, the Conservancy's role has primarily been that of technical advisor.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

Issues confronted and ably met by Eldridge Street include: securing city, state, and federal recognition of the building's unique architectural and historic significance; facilitating public funding of a religious building; documenting the building and founding congregation's origins and turning the building itself into a teaching tool for conveying the unique and ongoing role of this neighborhood in the nation's vibrant immigrant history; turning decisions about which portions of the building to preserve and restore and to what period into a teaching tool, providing a case study for several generations of preservation graduate students and preserving the worship congregation's stake in the project and presence in the building over years of challenging construction; engaging Eldridge Street's neighbors, New York City's Chinese immigrant community, with joint programming; and ultimately, developing and financing vibrant cultural and educational programs to bring new life, and a new community, to this important landmark.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

The trade-offs and compromises that the Conservancy has been involved with are the catch-22 decisions that face any monument with huge deferred maintenance capital needs and incremental funding. Where does the restoration start, and where does it end? The prosaic and not-very visible roof, site drainage and structural stabilization of the building were the priorities if the building was to remain standing, but these needs had to be balanced with the needs of donors, who needed physical, visible evidence of restoration progress to stay interested in the project over many years and phases. In addition to our more substantial loans and grants for priority structural projects, the Conservancy helped fund restoration of a handful of stained glass windows in 2002 and 2005, to demonstrate what full restoration and reinstallation of these windows (many removed and carefully stored before they collapsed and were lost) would look like, and to show progress to the project's individual donors (the first windows were restored beginning in 1992).
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

For the preservation community, this project has demonstrated that a small, independent, grass roots group can successfully steer an enormous restoration project from dereliction and decline to revitalized facility and reborn cultural institution. This is especially important for the Conservancy's constituents, many of them nonprofit owners of historic New York City and state cultural and religious institutions. For the Lower East Side neighborhood, the physical renaissance of this once derelict facility, and the presence of dozens and hundreds of visitors on a daily and weekly basis, is symbolic of the revitalization of the Lower East Side as a whole.

Probably not. If Eldridge Street had magically received millions in angel funding right at the outset of this project in the 1980's, it might be a restored synagogue, but it would not have the life it has today, as a community resource and nationally recognized cultural institution, a process which needed the slow evolution and percolation that the multi-year project facilitated.
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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name: Merrill Hesch
Title: Grants Officer
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Signature: Merrill Hesch

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) provided five matching grants totaling $775,000 to the Eldridge Street Project/Museum at Eldridge Street for capital construction at the Eldridge Street Synagogue. The first two grants ($250,000) were awarded in 1987 under the Environmental Quality Bond Act grants program at the start of the restoration effort and helped pay for the initial stabilization. Two subsequent grants ($175,000) were awarded in 1998 under the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act grants program for slate roof replacement and façade restoration. The last grant ($350,000) was awarded in 2006 under the Environmental Protection Act grants program for stained glass restoration.

Grant requirements for all of the awards included being listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places, providing at a minimum a 1:1 match to the State grant, exclusive of any federal funds, and the restoration had to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties, restoration guidelines established by the National Park Service. All of the grants required a provision for the long term protection of the building and the Eldridge Street Project/Museum at Eldridge Street was required to sign a historic preservation covenant with each grant award, requiring approval from OPRHP for any additional work on the building for twenty more years.

Our agency provided one of the first sources of funding for the work, lending credibility to the restoration and fundraising efforts.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The goals of our historic preservation grant programs in the Environmental Quality Bond Act and Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act were to help restore significant historic resources, especially in densely populated areas or areas where a substantial proportion of the population is of low income or otherwise disadvantaged or underserved. The restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue clearly met our goals. The synagogue, a National Historic Landmark, has the highest landmark recognition identified by the National Park Services. The project is located in Manhattan's Chinatown/Lower East Side, a census tract of high poverty and high population density.

[your answers to questions 1. and 2. must fit on to this one page.]
3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

The restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue has had a profound impact on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and the City as a whole. Not only is the project a showcase of best restoration practices, but the Eldridge Street Project/Museum at Eldridge Street provides interpretation of the historic resource and provides a venue for innovative and expanded programming in the arts, education, preservation and history, while the use continues uninterrupted as a house of worship.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

This project provided a successful example of a public/private partnership. The Eldridge Street Project/Museum at Eldridge Street was created as a separate not-for-profit, working hand-in-hand with the owners of the synagogue in a joined effort to reclaim this historic resource. The Eldridge Street Project/Museum at Eldridge Street was highly successful in its fundraising efforts, and was able to secure extensive City funding for the project, in addition to the State grants and private funding.

5. What do you consider the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect of the project was the adhered restoration philosophy which followed the retention of as much historic fabric as possible, and incorporating varying methodologies of work including conservation, stabilization, restoration, and replacement. This is one of the few buildings having undergone a total restoration effort that shows a patina of time. This patina is so important in allowing those not versed in a preservation vocabulary to clearly understand the historical and architectural context of the building and restoration.

[Note: your answers to questions 3., 4. and 5. must fit onto this one page.]
1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The New York City Department of Design & Construction was tasked with the responsibility of managing the project from start of design through construction completion. This Agency was involved in reviewing all the necessary paperwork required for all the oversight agencies involved such as Department of Business Services for Vendor Integrity, the Mayor's Office of Contracts, the Department of Buildings, the Office of Management and Budget and the Comptroller. The process was very well planned and thought out resulting in 4 registered contracts which began in 2003 until the current day and the combined total value is: approximately $7M. Different components of the site were completed and paid for based on rules and regulations of the City of New York.

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2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The Museum at Eldridge Street is a new addition to the list of NYC Landmarks as well as to the list of National Historic Landmarks located in New York City. It has become a new cultural and educational site for people in New York City and from all over the globe. This designation increases the fabric and history of the City and adds to the cultural diversity found here. There were no trade offs or compromises implemented to working on this project.

[Note – your answers to questions 1. and 2. must fit on to this one page.]
3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

The creation of the Museum at Eldridge Street yields an important link to a crucial part of American History. Needless to say, it also adds to the economic development of the Lower East Side. There are several points of interests for visitors to NYC and very specifically in this part of the City and this beautiful structure, added to the list of places to visit increases people traffic. In turn, people traffic translates to money spent—very critical for the redevelopment of this area of the City since 9/11. In conclusion, the restoration of this former house of worship adds to the fabric of the City.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

This project is very much a success story of the private/public partnership concept. What is today known as the Museum at Eldridge Street started as a not for profit organization interested in preserving the Jewish history of the Lower East Side. Throughout the entire process, cooperation between City officials and consultants and employees of the organization coordinated and collaborated on how this process should proceed and be carried out. The final product is a testament to the effectiveness of this partnership.

5. What do you consider the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect of the project is the magnificent restoration of the Synagogue. Throughout the design process the details were not left out. Special methodologies of work encompassing conservation and restoration were part of the design discussions from the beginning to the end of the contract process. This makes it that much more special.

There really isn't any negative aspect to this project. Work was consistently completed on time and within designated contractual budgets. Cooperation was extremely good and the management of the project was of the highest caliber possible. It was a pleasure to work with all those involved in this project (Eldridge Street staff and consultants alike).

[Note: your answers to questions 3., 4. and 5. must fit onto this one page.]
PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name  Angela Blocker
Organization City of New York Dept. of Cultural Affairs
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Signature

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs was a public agency funder of the Museum at Eldridge Street/Eldridge Street Project. Through our capital projects unit DCA supports design and construction projects and major equipment purchases at 34 City-owned cultural institutions and approximately 200 other cultural facilities throughout the five boroughs of New York City. As a recipient of DCA capital funds it was required that ESP adhere to New York City procurement policy guidelines for the publicly funded portion of their construction project. Primarily, this entailed ensuring competitive bidding practices and demonstrating fiscal and organizational capacity to manage a construction project.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The goals of the DCA capital program are to assist the nonprofit cultural community in providing increased public service and greater access to cultural facilities throughout the City. All projects that receive DCA funding must, in some way, enhance exhibition or performing space or serve to better maintain and preserve historic buildings and cultural collections. While The Museum at Eldridge Street fits into the goals of the DCA, by nature of its siting in a synagogue – a religious site – the project initially met some resistance by other City of New York agencies with jurisdiction over project funding. The Department of Cultural Affairs played an active role in advocating on behalf of the ESP in ensuring others that the projects preservation and programmatic mission were clearly in line with DCA's mandate and, further, that the buildings physical restoration contributed to the historic fabric of the City. We were successful in getting the project reviewed and approved across city agencies.

[Note — your answers to questions 1. and 2. must fit on this one page.]
3. Describe the project’s impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

In an ever changing city and, in particular, the rapidly developing neighborhood of the Lower East Side, the restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue stands as a monument and artifact to the rich history of the early immigrant population that helped shape the City of New York and, by extension, the City’s place in the history of the United States. As both a city and national landmark, the building’s restoration has proven to be a major asset to the social, cultural, and historic fabric of the City of New York, contributing to the revitalization of the neighborhood and serving as major tourism destination for visitors to the city.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

The development of the Museum at Eldridge Street is an outstanding example of public/private partnership. It is not always the case to have such a diverse stream of funding and participation available for a project, but the resources available for the ESP project represented a broad coalition, including local, state, federal, familial, and neighborhood support. In this regard, several pages can be taken from the lesson books of the ESP project. But, what best represents the project, as a model for other non-profits and what cities may look to is the tenacity and dedication that the project embodied. This project shows that a spirited group of individuals with a clear vision is what is most needed to bring a successful project to fruition.

5. What do you consider the most and least successful aspects of this project?

While there isn’t much that was unsuccessful about the project, (and I believe we have even more of its successes yet to witness), one could point to the time involved in getting the project completed as, perhaps, a least desirable aspect. That said, it cannot be underestimated that the 20 years it took to bring the project to fruition was, without a doubt, a labor of love. It is the strength and dedication of the team involved – from the staff and board of the ESP to the architects to the community – that truly signifies the success of this project.

[Note: your answers to questions 3., 4. and 5. must fit onto this one page.]
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name: Laurie Tobias-Cohen
Organization: Lower East Side Conservancy
Address: 235 E. Broadway
Fax: (212) 385-2893

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Signature: __________________________
1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

Since the LES Conservancy was formed about 10 years ago, we consulted with Eldridge St. on the formation of our organization to look at how we could best serve the further preservation of the historic fabric of the Lower East Side. We have been pleased to have worked with Eldridge St. to enlist them as a site to be included in our tours of the neighborhood and we have co-sponsored several events with them over the years.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

As an advocate for the preservation of the living Jewish Community of the Lower East Side, we wanted to be sure that the restoration of the Eldridge St. Synagogue included provisions to maintain the continued functioning of the congregation.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them? N/A

[Note – your answers to questions 1, 2, and 3, must fit on to this one page.]
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (cont'd)

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?
Yes, the restoration of the building is a prime example of the type of preservation advocated by the LES Conservancy. As one of the most prominent synagogues in the area, the restoration of Eldridge St. has not only preserved a key piece of the built environment of our neighborhood, but the high quality of the work performed, set a standard for other projects to emulate.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?
No.

[Note: your answers to questions 4. and 5. must fit onto this one page.]
OTHER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name: Jeff Greene  Title: President
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Signature: 

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

EverGreene performed the initial research and paint study in 1987-88, and followed the progress of the planned restoration project until 2006 when a second series of exposure windows were opened, painstakingly revealing each layer of paint on the dome and pendentives, comprehensively establishing the paint history. The first and second extant paint campaigns were uncovered, and after deliberation and further research the second campaign was selected. As the project evolved we helped establish the budgets as well as the philosophy of the scope of work and procedures. The implementation of the restoration effort to the target period of significance took place from the fall of 2006 to winter 2007 by a team of EverGreene artists and conservators. The scope of work involved decorative painting, decorative plaster, and flat plaster of the Synagogue.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

The Eldridge Street community is comprised of a number of overlapping collectives:

(1) **Immigrant Community**: To the immigrant population of the Lower East Side and Chinatown, the museum offers a window into Jewish culture, the history of their new neighborhood and a sense of place as the new wave within the tradition established by the 19th Century congregants of the Eldridge Street Synagogue. Community events such as “Egg Rolls and Egg Cream” invite the present and historic communities to learn about themselves and each other.

(2) **Jewish Community**: As the first purpose built Synagogue for Eastern European Jews in America, and situated in the center of Jewish immigration, the Museum at Eldridge offers Jewish families of the Lower East Side, throughout New York and across the country the opportunity to reconnect with their past. Eldridge Street continues to serve the members of this community by opening its doors as both a museum and a place of worship.

(3) **The greater arts and culture community of New York**: Unique sets of concerts, art exhibits and lectures not presented anywhere else, are performed in the exquisitely restored space, drawing practitioners and appreciators of the arts to Eldridge Street. The museum is a beautiful venue for this community to congregate downtown.

(4) **Young Professionals**: The museum, which functions as a landmark, cultural institution, venue and place of worship is a part of the recent gentrification of the Lower East Side. It offers historical, visual, auditory, spiritual and intellectual enticement to those without historical ties to the neighborhood, to this evolving local.

(5) **New York tourists (local and from afar)**. The museum offers New Yorkers, and visitors alike an interactive education in Jewish tradition, New York history and architecture and how the efforts of the Eldridge Street community brought back a deteriorated building.

Eldridge Street exists within these groups and invites each of them to share in its development and to be a part of this layered community's collective history.
3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

As an architectural conservator there were some unusual solutions employed in this project. Because it was important to preserve the palpable ambience of history by conserving as much of the original fabric as possible, our work was a synthesis of pure conservation in some areas and restoration in others. The decision to maintain a patina of age on the intricately hand-painted designs of the interior is a salute to its history, and a choice acknowledging the new use of the space as a combined sacred space and museum. Eldridge Street incorporates different target periods of significance which I believe enhances the visitors' experience allowing each of them to interpret it in different ways.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect of this project is that it creates a sense of living history. The diversity of programming while continuing to function as a sacred space makes is an impressive negotiation between its own history and the history it is making as an active member of a changing community.

The least successful aspect of this project is that not everybody knows about it yet - I'd love to see an even broader audience than they have already.

[Note: your answers to questions 4. and 5. must fit onto this one page.]
Photo credit: Kate Hunter
"Wer keine Frau hat, lebt ohne Freude, ohne Glück, ohne Seligkeit"

TALMUD, JEBAMOT 62 B
Museum Madness

Museums are hit and miss with young kids. Josie, at 6, was enthralled by the Experience exhibit at the Met last summer, but Maxine, 3, was less charmed. (She hung from my arm and wailed, "I have to leave this being place or I am going to die!"") Last year, at William Steig Storybook Family Day at the Jewish Museum, Maxine had a blast designing an illustrated book with me at a crafts table, but when she spied the guy in the massive green Shrek costume, she let out a shriek of mortal terror and clung to me like a liver. Both girls tolerated the Museum Madness event at the Brooklyn Museum — bright cobalt Cutemens! The promise of a flower-shaped plush happy face pin at the gift shop — though Josie and her friend Lila exploded in giggles at the statue of a huge-breasted woman juggling a rope of her own breast milk.

Thankfully, the kids were oblivious to the nearby statue of the young cowboy whirling a lasso made of semen. I hadn't read up on the exact content of the show before taking the kids. (And then I collected my parenting metal.)

So when we visited the Museum at Eldridge Street a few weeks ago, I wasn't sure what to expect. But Preservation Detectives, the museum's one-hour kids' program offered every Sunday, was a hit with both girls. They were handed notebooks as soon as we arrived, in which to record clues about this gorgeous 1887 Moorish building on the Lower East Side. Thanks to the Backyardigans and Blues Clues, even Maxine understood how to be a detective. She looked around and squinted self-importantly, scribbling gibberish in her notebook, furiously and secretly. Our charming guide asked the seven kids on the tour to look around for clues about the building's former inhabitants: What might the 19th-century congregate have been like? What could we learn from the worn floorboards, the narrow and steep stairs, the numbered seats edging the stage, the numbered seats, or the tattered paint underneith them. They could wielding a digital brush to dust off and restore the image, and when it was sufficiently clean, the image of a chisel appeared on the wall. They could also watch old moving images, while the guide coached them about what the films revealed, what the neighborhood must have felt like.

And lots of little people didn't have to stay still for too long. The group traipsed through the building, gazing up at the 70-foot vaulted ceiling and hand-carved pulpits, peering over the balcony of the women's section and pondering what it might have been like to sit up there back in the day. They then topped back downstairs to do crafts projects. They made photo collages using colored images of today's Lower East Side, Josie busily cut out pictures of Chinese food names and donut doughnut signs, while Maxine told me what she was cut out (she is no more trustworthy with sharp blades than Sweeney Todd) and then glued things together and you. Girlfriends loves the glue.

The kids then made "stained glass windoows" by taping bits of colored paper to the back of cardboard cutouts shaped like the synagogue's ingressive cupola windows. (Another window was blown out in the hurricane of 1938 and replaced with clear glass bricks, which remain.) As the patches of peeling, crumbling wall, allowing viewers to see some of the building's history in its unreconstructed elements. By the end of the tour, Maxie was certain she'd go for the vanilla bean; I'm partial to the treacle. We then completed the holy trinity of Lower East Side nothing — pickles at the Pickle Guys (alas, old-school loyalties: the pickles there are tastier than those at Gus's) and blaps at Konsh's, and strolled back home by way of Orchard Street, blissfully closed to traffic on Sundays.

We've also done the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, which I adore (You need, by the way, to wear a headset, and it's pretty hot out there). But you enter a tenement built in the 1800s, filled with tiny apartments, and learn about its residents, who represent different eras, religions and ethnicities. (You can only visit with a tour, and only with a reservation; your best bet is to check out the tenement.org and reserve the tour you want online.) For kids, the way to go is the Confino Family Apartment tour. I took Josie two years ago. A docent informed us that when we were new immigrants in 1916, visiting the home of a Sephardic Jewish family, and that we had come to ask the father for advice about work, and everyone settled a very funny costumed interpreter. She whispered advice to us about cheating the apartment's water meter (she suggested we carve fake tokens out of ice, but not too often, since they'd rust out the meter's inards), played records for us on wind-up Victrola, and informed one gentleman, dressed for the summer heat, that in America "short pants" were only appropriate for small boys. When she saw that Josie (then not quite 5) was peering belligerently at the meter's innards, played records for us on wind-up Victrola, and informed one gentleman, dressed for the summer heat, that in America "short pants" were only appropriate for small boys.

We haven't done the Ellis Island tour with the kids yet — I loved it when I went as a bored 11-year-old, but the guide tour is essential, and Maxine can't handle a headnet. I'd have to pretend I'm Jules on the Contra tour if Josie had been a little older and more patient. So we'll wait on Ellis Island. Like the Lower East Side, it's been there for centuries, and we have time. I don't want to rush things.
From the Brink of Death to Life Overflowing

By JULIE SALAMON

I'd be careful how you use that word "aesthetics,"" Brandon Gratz, founder of the Eldridge Street Project, who is a 13-year-old-synagogue Agrarian in the city of Chinvown and the Lower East Side in Manhattan.

It's a little bit of a delicate point, agreed Amy Waterman, executive director, in a separate interview. "Some of our board members would say, Don't call it a museum. It sounds like it's over, like it's ossified.

Her own feelings about that word? To me museum means my favorite pessoa," she said, continuing to be a member of the American Association of Museums.

Definitions can be problematic. Especially in a multi-faceted institution like this, which is also known as the Eldridge Street Synagogue (and remains a working house of worship) as well as a National Historic Landmark (a performance space and — indisputably — a museum. The Eldridge Street Project still carries its ancestral name partly because such distinctions are not academic for an organization that still needs $1 million to complete a $12 million renovation that has been going on for almost 26 years. In 2000, the City Council sided stepped the church-state divide to provide $1 million to help rehabilitate the physical plant by emphasizing that only one of Eldridge Street's hats is a skullcap.

For many of its Jewish visitors, the building's museum-like artifacts and faded, but still evocative, grandeur offer a perfect setting to channel ghosts from the past of the Lower East Side. "I just got goose bumps when I first walked in 25 years ago," said Ms. Gratz, an author and a member of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

When the synagogue was built, in 1887, it stood at the center of Eastern European Jewish immigration to the United States. This synagogue on almost every block, many in converted churches and tenement storefronts. Even then the Eldridge Street Synagogue tried to fulfill more than one need of its neighbors. With its 70-foot ceilings, a velvety-lit ark grand enough to store 24 Torah scrolls, trompe l'oeil mural and marveously stained-glass windows and sky lights, this grand (and gorgeous) space of worship aimed to signal the promise of prosperity associated with German, or as they said, Jews.

The neighborhood remains dominated by immigrants, but they are mainly Chinese. So, for the last five years on the first Sunday in June, the Eldridge Street Project sponsors an "Egg Rolls and Egg Creams Block Party." Torah scrolls and Chinese calligraphers compete with translatiions, and Hebrew and Chinese mandolin players offer instruction. Entertainment can include a flowing opera troupe and a klezmer band.

"People in the neighborhood look at it as a place to go to for cultural events," said Ken Ro, director of the China Arts Council. Ms. Lo, who grew up on the Lower East Side, is old enough to remember when a Jewish presence was evident on the streets, not just in institutions like the Lower East Side Tenement Museum and the Eldridge Street Project. "If there weren't any of these events at the synagogue, it would just be this strange building they don't know anything about.

Only one of the synagogue's hats is a skullcap.

LIVING HISTORY The Eldridge Street Project, housed in a 138-year-old synagogue, below, is a house of worship, a landmark building, a community resource and a museum. A world famous, restores the building's upper reaches. Annie Polland, above, the museum's educator and historian, teaches a second-grade class from Public School 1.

This institution-in-progress has also become a permanent construction site. An elevator is scheduled to be installed this summer, but most of the 65 stained-glass windows are still in crates inside, waiting to be cleaned and restored. In February, scaffolding went up in the upper balcony of the main sanctuary, where women used to sit for services, back in the days when 800 families belonged to the synagogue (compared with the dozen or so stalwart worshippers who come regularly today). The scaffolding will protect the synagogue's antique wooden benches while allowing workers to climb to hard-to-reach spaces up in the domes, and to remove peeling paint throughout the arched ceilings and prepare the surfaces for historically accurate paint finishes.

In this evolving museum, the renovation itself is part of the process of educating, preserving and memorializing. The project acquired a lot next door for a staging area for construction, only to uncover an archaeological find: a mikvah, a ritual bathing pool for Orthodox women, and two other baths. They have been covered up again, so workers can park construction equipment and a trailer on the lot. But, Ms. Waterman, ever ambitious for the project, revealed more plans for the future. "We fantasize about a mikvah-cafe arrangement," she said, "like the Roman baths in Bath, England."

By 1991, the founders were willing to take the plunge — or dip their toes, at least — into the museum world. The Eldridge Street Project officially became a museum and joined the American Association of Museums. Ms. Waterman came on board that year and began a series of programs that has evolved into an inventive assortment of lectures, concerts and 21st-century art exhibitions. The museum even has traveling exhibits. Last year, Christie's displayed artifacts from the Eldridge Street shul, which included ceramic spouts, an ornate spice box and a small glass container holding the ashes of the synagogue's matzoh. There was a staff of 16, including people in charge of education, development and public relations. About 18,000 to 20,000 visitors come every year, including schoolchildren from the neighborhood. Recently, a group of second graders from Public School 1 took a tour with Annie Polland, the museum's educator and historian.

"They talked about the meaning of words like history and immigrant and what those words meant on the Lower East Side. Ms. Polland then asked the children to draw a part of the synagogue they found beautiful and another part they felt needed work. When they finished, she said, "They almost exploded with questions." The session concluded with rouses and pickles and a promise that that class — made up primarily of children of Chinese immigrants — would return in April to learn about Passover.

Others bring their own histories for reinterpretation. "There was one fellow who would just come into the museum and say, 'This is the platform that holds the Torah when it is read,'" Ms. Waterman said.

The complexity of the building and its various meanings is not lost on the artists who perform here. Last September, the Guar­dian Ederley Ensemble performed Sophisticated and Ashkenazic cantorial melodies on traditional instruments with the cantor Alberto Mizrahi.

Mr. Ederley, in an interview described the circumstances. It was hot and humid, and there was no air-conditioning. The noise of the nearby subway made it impossible to keep the doors open. The house was packed with people familiarizing themselves with their programs. The bimah was crowded with musicians.

But Mr. Ederley said he wasn't worried, and not just because during the sound check he realized the acoustics were almost per­fect — no microphones needed. "Every instrument, every voice sounded so pristine and true to itself," he said. "Without being sentimental, I felt that place was like an ob­ject that has been ritualized and absorbed the power of that ritual. As uncomfortable and sweaty as we all were, we were totally inspired.

In the 20 years that have passed since Ms. Gratz watched in horror as water poured into the synagogue, she has become increasingly comfortable calling the Eldridge Street Project a museum.

"The concept of museum has changed," she said. "It doesn't have the connotation of a place that is only about the past. That's why Ederley can be comfortably put in that category, because we are not only about the past."
ONE ROOF, MANY BUILDINGS

The Eldridge Street Project is a synagogue, a landmark, a performance space, a museum — and, above all, a labor of love.


THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2005

SPECIAL TODAY

Museums

Non-Western art is out of its niche.

Also, the Eldridge Street Project in Manhattan, below, is synagogue, landmark and museum.

Michael Nagle for The New York Times
Return of a Long-Dormant Island of Grace

Stand at the center of the 1887 Eldridge Street Synagogue, whose main sanctuary opens tomorrow after a restoration that took 10 years and cost $20 million, and gaze upward past the chandeliers with their etched vintage glass, toward the 70-foot-high vaulted ceiling, painted with gilded stars.

Even now — as this space’s religious function has faded and been folded into the newly named Museum at Eldridge Street, and as Irving Howe’s “world of our fathers” on the Lower East Side in New York becomes more like the “world of our great-grandfathers” — it is possible to be awestruck by the exotic splendor of this meticulously restored sanctuary. It is elaborately ornamented with mock-Turkish motifs, Moorish arches and fantastical trompe l’oeil painting that turns plaster into marble, pine into mahogany and molded decoration into eroded stone. Imagine, then, the impact it must have had on its worshippers when this synagogue flourished amid its neighborhood’s raucous, grinding poverty and slum tenements, and its residents’ intoxicating American ambitions and devout Old World beliefs.

At the close of the 19th century, it must have seemed otherworldly. The Lower East Side had become the waystation for the United States’ most recent immigrants of Italians and Eastern European Jews. Between 1880 and 1890 alone — as the synagogue was constructed, dedicated and began its intense, all-too-brief life — 60,000 immigrant Jews settled there. By 1910, according to the historian Hasia R. Diner, the neighborhood contained half a million Jews; by contrast, Vienna, one of the largest Jewish centers in Europe, had a Jewish population of 175,000, and Chicago, about 100,000.

Restored Island of Grace Amid Former Slums

This neighborhood had one of the largest Jewish populations of any city in the world — and surely one of the poorest. Most of the area’s 60-odd synagogues were humble gathering places named after the Eastern European towns and shtetls from which their worshippers had fled, resembling the social clubs that develop among many immigrant communities.

Go to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, which blocks away on Orchard Street if you want to see how most of those worshippers really lived, crowding generations and occupations into three small, ill-lit rooms without plumbing, and then walk into this ethereal vault, with its expanses of space and skylights and stained glass. Who among those tenement dwellers would not have been amazed?

Now the synagogue seems otherworldly in a different way, framed by the shops and bustling sidewalks of a newer immigrant community. Just as the nearby Garden Cafeteria, once frequented by Isaac Bashevis Singer, became a Chinese restaurant, and as the building of the great Yiddish newspaper The Jewish Daily Forward came at one time to house a Chinese church, no doubt something similar would have happened to this synagogue.

Indeed, by the mid-1950s, without funds or a substantial congregation, the main sanctuary was sealed shut, only a modest accommodation continued to use the smaller ground-floor study hall. Then, in 1971, the water-damaged main sanctuary was surveyed with astonishment by Gerald R. Wolfe, a New York University professor, who founded the Friends of the Eldridge Street Synagogue. Fifteen years later, the preservationist and journalist Robert Brandes Glatz was so taken by its latent promise that she started the Eldridge Street Project, helped obtain its landmark status and began a fundraising drive that gradually brought the sanctuary back to life.

But what purpose could such a place serve if its religious function and community were gone? Rather than leave it a monument to an earlier faith, the Eldridge Street Project turned the building into a symbol of a contemporary, secular faith. In the 1990s, the synagogue, its renovation unfinished, became a museum, a center, in the words of the Project, “for historical reflection, aesthetic inspiration and spiritual renewal.”

The Project welcomed 15,000 to 20,000 visitors yearly, offering a glimpse of 19th-century Jewish religious life along with insights into the broader immigrant experience. Lectures and events, some involving the local Chinese community, anchored the building in its altered neighborhood.

Now, with the stunning restoration, overseen by the architects Walter Sedov and Jill H. Gottlieb, almost four times the number of annual visitors have experienced the renovated bastion.

The spring, public programs will include an introduction to oral history in a Family History Center, which will offer genealogical information, a concert featuring immigrant music of the vaudeville era, and lectures on Jewish fiction and Yiddish movies.

Next summer, under the guidance of the education director, Annie Polland, a five-day teacher workshop on “Immigration, Religion and Culture of New York’s Lower East Side” will take place, financed by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The newly reconstructed study hall — which includes the wooden ark that served the congregation before 1887 — will still function as a sanctuary on Friday nights and Saturdays. At other times, it will be open for guided tours. In an adjacent space, monitors and projected images of two high-tech “history tables” will respond to touch, showing neighborhood highlights, explaining the synagogue’s structure and exploring the once-thriving Yiddish newspapers.

But it is in the sanctuary that the museum’s themes will come into full play, particularly if the guides are as knowledgeable as Ms. Polland, who is completing a book on the synagogue for Yale University Press. This Orthodox Jewish synagogue, she points out, for all its adherence to traditional religious law (women in balconies as men ran the service), was shaping a new form of American Judaism.

The synagogue was built with the support of successful Eastern European immigrants who could afford major contributions to its initial $92,000 cost. In its ambitious opening years, Ms. Polland points out, the synagogue even paid for the distinguished Russian cantor Pinhas Minkovsky to move to New York and lead the congregation. But lay leadership, rather than rabbinical leadership, was central, and it overlapped with the boards of other groups helping new immigrants.

The synagogue’s architects were two little-known German brothers named Herter, who also built tenements and lofts in the neighborhood. But the leadership approved a design for this Eastern European synagogue that deliberately echoed the Moorish

The Museum at Eldridge Street, incorporating the restored Eldridge Street Synagogue and its vaulted ceiling, above, opens tomorrow.
Jewish, Chinese faves hit spot

EGGCELLENT ADVENTURE

Cory Braggs (left), Claudine Biles (center) and Maureen La site their appetites at sixth annual egg rolls and egg creams block party on Eldridge St. on the lower East Side yesterday.

BY BILL EGERT

EGG ROLLS AND egg creams made for a multicultural match-up's heaven on the lower East Side yesterday.

The mouth-watering Chinese and Jewish delicacies—neither one of which has any eggs in them—brought the two communities together for the day on Eldridge St., in the heart of the ever-changing neighborhood.

"I wanted to do something that brought the whole community together, and they listened to me," said Hanna Griff of the Eldridge Street Project, which dispensed egg rolls and egg creams from a table on the street.

Elderly Chinese and Jewish women faced off on mah-jongg tables, and kids got their faces painted on a sparkling spring day.

Klezmer music alternated with Chinese opera. Scribes drew characters in Hebrew and Chinese languages.

And, boy, did they love the egg rolls and egg creams. Lines wound up and down the street, prompting oldtimers to say they'd never seen a bigger turnout on the block. "Each year, more and more people come," said Beatrice Stanger, 78, who has lived on the lower East Side since she was a child. "I've never seen so many people here before.

It's the sixth year for the egg rolls and egg creams block party, which is sponsored by the group renovating the century-old Eldridge Street Synagogue.

Griff, who studies folklore, said she's been struck by the similarities between the legends and rituals of the Jewish and Chinese peoples—two ancient cultures that now share space in the neighborhood.

And they both like to eat. "We're going to have to have two tables next year," Griff said.

Arms Hell of Huyssen, the Brass, serves up egg cream, while the Bay Muskar Klezmer Ensemble (back) plays traditional Jewish music, which alternated with street artists performing Chinese Opera (front). Other cross-cultural events yesterday included mah-jongg tournaments and face-painting for the kids.
June 4, 2001

Hsing Fu Daily News

years. 香港政府表示，会密切留意相关发展，确保香港的稳定和繁荣。
The last time this department looked into the Eldridge Street Synagogue, down in Ben Shahn country, near the Manhattan Bridge, was almost twenty years ago, when the restoration of the synagogue—the first and the grandest of the temples built by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe—was just beginning. Decades of enforced neglect had left the sanctuary sealed off and with pigeons roosting in the rafters. It was, this magazine’s correspondent wrote then, “like the Twilight Zone. The room was covered with dust. There were prayer shawls strewn about, and ceramic spittoons on the floor. . . . In the ark were thirty Torahs, in various stages of decomposition.”

This week, at last, the work is complete, with a spiffiness that would have been inconceivable in that less flush time for the city and the neighborhood. And though the project may have set some sort of Landmarks Preservation Commission record (Longest Time for Continuous Restoration, Synagogue), it has also returned the grand, stained-glass-and-polished-wood-neo-Moorish-Yiddish-Romanesque-Renaissance-Gothic-You-Find-a-Name-for-It space back to its neighborhood and to New Yorkers. Walk down Eldridge Street now and you see the synagogue, almost hallucinatory in its luminosity, wedged in among the workaday tenements and Chinese storefronts like a bright and happy dollhouse.

Eldridge opened in 1887, when four local Jewish merchants—a sausage king, a plate-glass dealer, a banker, and a real estate guy—hired a heretofore undistinguished architectural firm called Herter Brothers to build them a synagogue. But the restoration has returned the temple to the way it was in 1907, when electricity was installed, and a row of light bulbs was used to edge a panel displaying the Ten Commandments, in the style of a marquee.

The glory of the synagogue is the scale of its interior—a seventy-foot-high-by-thirty-foot-wide barrel vault, whose two-tiered design (the second tier, which wraps around three sides, rather than just at the back, was originally meant for Orthodox women) makes it seem even higher than it is and gives it spectacular acoustics. The first thing that the founders did was to bring in Pinchas Minkowsky, a then legendary cantor from Odessa, for the then immense sum of fifteen thousand dollars, on a then unheard-of five-year contract—the cantorial A-Rod of his time.

“The synagogue was the first grand gesture on the part of the Eastern European Jews who were arriving in New York,” Annie Polland, the house historian, explained the other day, as final touches were being put on hand-stencilled wall decorations. “Until then, the new congregations took over old Protestant churches. Eldridge was built not just as a statement to the neighborhood but as a statement to the German Jews uptown.” Central Synagogue, on Lexington Avenue, and an earlier edition of Temple Emanu-El, on Grand and Clinton Streets, had already opened; Eldridge, downtown, was defiantly grand, and insistently “Orthodox,” a word that was already in use. “When you bought a seat to pray at Eldridge, the contract promised that if the congregation ever allowed organ music, or men and women singing together in the choir, you’d get double your money back,” Polland said. “It was a strong anti-Reform statement.”

The circumstances that led to the gradual neglect of the sanctuary are familiar, though: as Jews moved away from the neighborhood, it became harder and harder to summon a minyan. Finally, in the nineteen-fifties, the worshippers moved into a small room below the great sanctuary for their services. The two dozen members who have held on throughout the renovation are still down there. The restored sanctuary will be used for services on
holidays and special occasions, but it's also going to be open to the public as a museum of the immigrant experience on the Lower East Side.

"There aren't many Jews moving here, but I hope the congregation will expand," Polland said. "The hipster Jews are back," she added with a laugh. As she looked around the shining space, she lowered her voice and murmured, "They say that there's a lot of numerological significance encoded in the proportions of Eldridge. There are twelve windows upstairs for the twelve tribes, and five downstairs for the five books, but my favorite is that there are four doors leading into the synagogue, perhaps symbolizing the four matriarchs—Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, and Leah. Three of them are also the names of three of the wives of the four merchants who founded it. They got in somehow."

She walked over, past the restored bimah, or pulpit, and opened the door of the ark. "I've heard that the velvet lining of the ark is unchanged from the day the synagogue opened, because it's been completely protected from light and air," she said. She cautiously slid open the door. Inside, the pleated red velvet looked as fresh and festive as the icing on a birthday cake—direct from 1887, and still as good as new.

ILLUSTRATION: TOM BACHTELL
Restoration of Synagogue Saves a Sense of History

By FERNANDA SANTOS

Max Smith sat on a folding chair yesterday, gazing at the intricate terra-cotta carvings that adorn the facade of the Eldridge Street Synagogue on the Lower East Side, a sight that stirred memories of an era gone by.

When Mr. Smith, 91, was a young boy, policemen roamed the neighborhood on horseback during the High Holy Days, ushering hundreds of families into the packed sanctuary, recognized as the nation's first synagogue built by Eastern European Jews.

"There was not a seat vacant inside," recalled Mr. Smith, who celebrated his bar mitzvah at the 19th-century synagogue on Sept. 10, 1927, around the time he and his family moved to the Bronx. "And if there were people who couldn't get in, they prayed on the front steps or right here on the street."

But over the years, as tens of thousands of Jewish families traded the Lower East Side for more prosperous areas, the once bustling Orthodox congregation found itself reduced to a few dozen worshippers, who could not keep up with repairs.

Soon, cracks on the floor of the women's gallery turned into gaping holes. The sheet metal that lined the roof crumbled. Rain washed away the murals on the walls and warped the wooden benches. Outside, the blond brick, stone and terra cotta, blackened by soot. The finials that adorned the roof slowly fell apart.

Much-needed renovations did not start until the 1980's, after a group of enthusiasts raised grant money to stop the deterioration.

It was only yesterday, though, that Mr. Smith and 100 others — residents, worshippers and dignitaries — gathered to mark the project's most important milestone so far: the restoration of the synagogue's facade.

When the Lower East Side was a center of Jewish life.

"This is a very special moment," said Tova G. Bookson, whose husband, Paul P. E. Bookson, a retired judge, was a past president of the synagogue and a supporter of its restoration. The Eldridge Street Synagogue, a National Historic Landmark, was built in 1887 as a symbol of Eastern European Jewish immigration to the United States. It sits in the shadows of the Manhattan Bridge, a block south of Canal Street, where Jewish bakeries, markets and clothing stores have been replaced by Chinese restaurants and fish markets.

The synagogue was on the verge of collapse in 1986 when Ms. Bookson and her group stepped in to help rescue it. Many other synagogues citywide, but particularly on the Lower East Side, did not meet the same fate: faced with shrinking congregations and aging structures, they ended up in the hands of real estate developers or found new use as mosques, churches and in once case a Buddhist temple. And this year, another old synagogue, the First Romanian-American Congregation on Rivington Street, was demolished after its roof collapsed.

In Eldridge Street, the goal at first was simply to shore up the decaying structure. The restoration itself followed, though in very small steps. The first-floor sanctuary was replastered and painted, six stained glass windows were restored and installed, the ornamental gates outside received a fresh coat of antitrust solution.

A year ago, scaffolding went up in the upper balcony to allow workers to clean hard-to-reach spaces in the domes and remove peeling paint. Before work began, workers cataloged the synagogue's artistic details. Ultimately, that is what allowed Walter Sedlick and Jill E. Gotttheil, the architects in charge of the restoration, to order a replica of the central ornamental finial, which rose to its perch at the center of the roof by boom lift as the crowd who joined yesterday's celebration applauded.

"The restoration of the synagogue and a supporter of its restoration until his death last September, Mr. Bookson, has children and..."
Raymond Clagnan, left, and Kesler Pierre at work restoring the rose window over the entrance of the Eldridge Street Synagogue.

Synagogue Window Returns for Rosh Hashana

By JAMES BARRON

Amy Milford said seven words—"When we reopen, unbelievably, on Dec. 2"—and then let the sentence trail off.

The word "unbelievably" referred to an undertaking that began in the 1980s and moved one step closer to completion yesterday—the restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue on the Lower East Side. Ms. Milford is the deputy director of the Eldridge Street Project, the nonprofit, nonsectarian cultural organization responsible for the $16 million restoration.

As she stood on a wooden construction platform inside the 120-year-old temple, glass workers were busy reinstalling the 15-foot-wide rose window over the entrance, on Eldridge Street a few steps south of Canal Street.

The window returned to the synagogue just in time for Rosh Hashana. What with all the scaffolding and construction equipment, the services celebrating the Jewish New Year will be held downstairs, as they have been for some years. And once the restoration is complete, said Bonnie Dimon, the director of the Eldridge Street Project, there will be daily tours, art exhibitions and cultural programs.

The temple, which dates to 1887, now has a tiny congregation, but it has played a vital role in the history of Jewish life in America. It was a spiritual home for thousands of Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe and worshiped there after settling on the Lower East Side.

Over the years, as their descendants moved away and Chinatown pushed closer to the temple, the congregation dwindled and the building deteriorated. Water pouring through the roof had damaged the murals and the wooden benches in the sanctuary. Jeffrey Greene, who has overseen the repainting, said that pigeons fluttered overhead. Outside, time had darkened the tan brick of the facade.

The reinstallation of the rose window was less dramatic than the first phase of the restoration, when workers found a long-lost skeleton in a coal ash pile in the basement. There was speculation at the time that the skeleton had been there for more than 30 years.

The rose window and the stained-glass windows along the sides of the sanctuary were taken out in the 1980s. The glass was dirty and broken in places.

But the lead framework that held the glass in place was in worse shape, said Raymond Clagnan, a second-generation stained-glass artisan who has worked on the restoration. The lead had softened over the years, he said, and pieces of the glass had fallen out.

Mr. Clagnan said the 70 windows in the synagogue held thousands of pieces of glass. He marveled that they were made with only 12 colors, reflecting an economy of design that belied the thrilling result.

"It was very thought out," he said.

The restoration of the rose window was also carefully thought out. He and his colleagues at the Gil Studio in Brooklyn washed each of the glass panels in a shallow tank. Then they re-led the windows and, yesterday, began putting them back in place.

At the opposite end of the sanctuary, glass bricks fill the space once occupied by a second rose window. "We know there was a hurricane in 1938, and we know the congregation had to replace that window then," Ms. Milford said.

She said the design for its replacement was still in the planning stage. She said it would probably carry two dates—5648, for when the synagogue opened, and 5768, for when the restoration was completed.

She also finished that sentence about the reopening in December, saying the completed building would reflect the "culture and tradition of Eastern European Jews while remaining responsive to the fact that there's been a sea change in the neighborhood."
The Museum at Eldridge Street, founded as the Eldridge Street Project in 1986, presents the culture, history and traditions of the great wave of Jewish immigrants to the Lower East Side, drawing parallels with the diverse cultural communities that have settled in America. The Museum is located within the Eldridge Street Synagogue, which opened its doors in 1887. Nearly lost to time, harsh weather, and limited use, this National Historic Landmark has been faithfully restored to its original, evocative grandeur. Tours, exhibits, and public and educational programs tell the story of the generations that carried religious and communal customs to a new country, and celebrate America’s broad cultural traditions.

12 Eldridge Street, New York, NY 10002 Tel: 212.219.0888 | Fax: 212.966.4782
www.eldridgestreet.org
THE 1887 SOCIETY—
INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

The Museum at Eldridge Street's 1887 Society honors the immigrant founders of the Eldridge Street Synagogue and recognizes individuals whose legacy will live on at this National Historic Landmark site. Members of the 1887 Society are generous people who express their interest in preserving Jewish heritage through estate, life insurance or charitable remainder trust gifts to the Museum at Eldridge Street.

CAPITAL NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

The Museum at Eldridge Street relies on the generous contributions of individuals, foundations, corporations, and government agencies to provide high-quality, impactful cultural and educational programs to a broad audience. We encourage you to provide ongoing support to Eldridge Street through the (1) Restoration Capital Campaign and Building Fund, with numerous opportunities for perpetual on-site plaque acknowledgement, (2) Permanent Naming of Cultural and Educational Programs and Services, and the (3) Annual Fund, which supports annual cultural and educational activities, as well as the organization's general operations.

For more information, please contact Eva Brune, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, at 212.219.0888 x202 or by e-mail at ebrune@eldridgestreet.org.

As a small boy I came here every Saturday, right here in the main sanctuary. I'd like to think that 50 years from now there will be Silvers on the Lower East Side living here and perhaps making their way to the Eldridge Street Synagogue as well because we took the necessary steps to promote cultural continuity and to install a sense of respect for Jewish traditions and the sacrifices and contributions Jewish immigrants have made to this, the greatest city on earth.

—The Honorable Sheldon Silver, Speaker, New York State Assembly Rededication Ceremony, December 2007

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From the Chairman

More than a decade ago, I first entered the Eldridge Street Synagogue, then in a state of severe disrepair. Even amidst the crumbling walls and peeling paint was a site to striking, and a history so palpable, that I knew I had to be a part of the community to save it. This annual report celebrates the culmination of our efforts—of so many friends and supporters who have rallied to preserve this 120-year-old building and open it as a cultural and educational center serving people of all backgrounds.

After a 20-year, $17.5 million restoration, I am proud to report that the Eldridge Street Synagogue is glorious again. Come visit us on the Lower East Side and save one of New York City’s most exquisite spaces. Nestled between tenements and modest shops, the building’s grand architecture and bold stones of David are a proud testament to the aspirations of our immigrant forebears. By saving the building we honor their labor and achievements.

With the completion of the restoration, a new chapter begins in our organization’s history. As other landmarks of Jewish migration to the Lower East Side fall to the wayside, how important it is to renew this building with people and activity. I am pleased to report that in December 2007, our first month open again to the public, we welcomed more than 7,000 people.

The renewal of Eldridge Street is much more than when I first walked through these doors years ago. More beautiful, more vibrant and attracting a wonderful community of friends and supporters. Your vision has helped sustain us on this important endeavor. I thank you for your commitment and look forward to your continued participation. I applaud, too, our imaginative and tireless staff, and my wonderful colleagues on the Board of Directors for their patience, wisdom and generosity. May we celebrate another 120-years plus at Eldridge Street!

Michael Weinstein
Chairman

From the Director

Wait in the footsteps of your immigrant ancestors.

Here at the Museum at Eldridge Street you can do just that. Our meticulous restoration of the 1887 Eldridge Street Synagogue has returned the building to its original grandeur. We have preserved poignant traces of the building’s earliest generation of parishioners. And so when you come to Eldridge Street, and sit in the pews, you can feel grooves in the floorboards created by years of use. Look around and you’ll see other reminders—from the Ark’s red velvet interior to original gas jets.

On January 15, 2008 we were granted museum status by the New York Board of Regents and launched our new name—Museum at Eldridge Street. The word “museum” has many connotations. For us, it reflects our commitment to creating a place of reflection, education and aesthetic inspiration.

I am struck by how often when we travel to another country, we make sure to visit Jewish sacred sites. But here in New York, in America, is a gloriously restored part of our heritage, a place that all of us should make a point to experience.

So come and visit! Bring your children and grandchildren to learn about their history and heritage. Discover a museum full of life—a place that connects you with earlier generations and whose grand design speaks to people of all ages and backgrounds. We are honored, too, to share the space with Congregation Kahal Adath, which has never missed a Sabbath or holiday service here since the building opened. As a New York Times article described, Eldridge Street “is a synagogue, a landmark, a performance space, a museum—and above all, a labor of love.”

Please accept my personal invitation to come and experience the Museum at Eldridge Street! You won’t be disappointed.

Bonnie Dimon
Executive Director
"STRINGS FROM HEAVEN"

Timeline

In the News

The restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue was featured in:

- AM New York Associated Press
- Bloomberg
- CBS Radio Network
- Daily News
- Delta Sky
- Forward Newspaper
- Fox 5 TV
- Hadassah Magazine
- In New York
- The Jewish Week
- Museum Magazine
- NY 1
- New York Magazine
- New York Post
- The New Yorker Sun
- The New Yorker
- NY-Preservation Magazine
- Time Out New York
- The Villager
- WABC-TV
- WCBS-TV
- WNBC-TV
- WNIT-TV
- WNYC-Radio

I know that if we didn't save Eldridge Street, we would have had to reinvent it.

—Robertta Brandes Gratza, Founder and President Emeritus
The Eldridge Street Synagogue is a historic synagogue located on Eldridge Street in Lower Manhattan, New York City. Constructed in 1887 at the height of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, the synagogue attracted members from far-ranging provinces of Eastern Europe and from every economic stratum. "Lawyers, merchants, artisans, clerks, peddlers, and laborers compose the dense but changeful throng. All are in respect to race and faith, but none in regard to birthplace and speech. I Pluralism Unum finds new meaning here." (Century Magazine, 1919-22) With migration and changing demographics, the synagogue's role evolved over the years. In 1966, under the auspices of the Eldridge Street Project a massive renovation began—the first major restoration in its history and was completed in 2007.

1950s—Doors to main sanctuary closed for more than twenty years, congregation holds services in the ground floor study hall.

1960s—1970s—Roof begins to leak, unattended, sanctuary begins to deteriorate. Community activists launch effort to rescue historic Synagogue.

1980s—Synagogue designated a New York City Landmark. Emergency funds raised to repair roof.

1986—Eldridge Street Project established to spearhead restoration effort and create Jewish heritage site at center.

1987—100th anniversary of Eldridge Street Synagogue.


1991—1995—Project launches public programs for tourists, school children and families. Programs presented by grants from NEA, NYCCA, and NYC DCA.

1996—Synagogue designated a National Historic Landmark by United States Secretary of the Interior.

1997—Eldridge Street Project expands public offerings: service to schools, klezmer and cantorial music concerts, literary events; annual street festival celebrating Eastern European and Chinese traditions; specific exhibitions. Restoration of site roof and Albany.

2003—Project proceeds with capital campaign to complete restoration. Infrastructure work completed.

2005—Programs continue with growing audiences, attention press and collegial recognition. Facade restored and Star of David bricks re-installed on synagogue roof.
GLORIOUS AGAIN!

“Only if we preserve and restore our past before it vanishes—if we make it vivid and accessible for new generations—will it truly live in our nation’s heart and history. The hard-won triumph of the [Museum at Eldridge Street]...assures us that this will be so.”

—Frank Rich, Rededication Ceremony, December 2007

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In December 2, more than 1,000 people joined us for our rededication ceremony and open house celebrating the restoration of the 1887 Eldridge Street Synagogue. The Honorable Sheldon Silver, Speaker of the New York State Assembly, served as Master of Ceremonies and highlighted his own family connection to Eldridge Street. The program featured a keynote address by New York Times columnist Frank Rich; musical performances by Cantors David Lefkowitz and Max Fuchs; and remarks by The Honorable Christine Quinn, Speaker of the New York City Council, and Honorable Scott M. Stringer, Manhattan Borough President. The ceremony was followed by an open house in which friends and supporters toured the restored building and its new exhibit spaces.

Restoration by the Numbers:
- 68-stained glass windows restored, with more than 250 panels and 600 decorative “jewels”
- 75 bulbs in restored grand chandelier; 64 Victorian-era fixtures restored
- 190 banquet tables repaired and refinished
- Hundreds of gallons of paint used for decorative finishes
- More than 200 contributing artisans and tradespeople
- More than 60,000 hours of labor
- More than 1,000 active donors
- Total cost $17.5 million over a 20-year period

An Award-Winning Restoration:
Our restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue garnered leading preservation awards:
- The Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America Restoration Award
- Municipal Art Society’s Most Meritorious Award for New York City’s Best Restoration Project
- The New York Landmarks Conservancy Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Project Achievement Award
- Preservation League of New York’s Restoration Award
EXHIBITIONS & INTERPRETATION

Gala
More than 550 people from New York’s business, arts and philanthropic communities joined us for our December 3rd gala honoring Lorinda Ash Ezerly, Jeffrey Gural and Michael Weinstein. The three played a leading role in the revitalization of Eldridge Street and their dedication, energy and activism have benefited many other important causes.

The festive evening began with cocktails at the newly restored synagogue followed by a dinner at Capitale. The dinner raised more than $1 million for the restoration.

Top row, left to right: Lorinda and Peter Ezerly with children Matthew and Adrianna; Jeffrey Gural, Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez and Paul Rockel; Roberto Baudes Gutz and Richard Rubenstein.

Second Row: Alison and James Heilman, Lisa Wilks, Emily Spiegel and Jeffrey Wilks.

Third Row: Jane Gural Senders and Susan Malloy; Peter Ezersky; Tony and Bonnie Dimun, Howard lor

Fourth Row: Steven and Helen Weisb; Michael and Sam Weinstein; Jan Mechanic, P. Sheridan and Amy Schechter.

Below: Lorinda Ash Ezerly and Adam Gopnik

“ar the American Association of Museum’s MUSE Awards

Galen

Glenn R. and Eva Dubin in memory of Lila and Gene Werker

Eliza and Warren Elsenberg

The Herman Zuber Charitable Trust

The Goldblum Foundation

Friends and Family in memory of Shoshana Gans

J. J. & Nikki Harris Family Foundation

Joseph Hazan Foundation

R. H. Heller

Lisa and Dennis Herman

Frederick H. Joseph

Mark and Anita Cheng Kangley Foundation

The Kornell Family

Marianne and Irving Lazar Foundation

Alice Lawrence

Jeff and Randy Levine in memory of Harriet and Benjamin Sherman

Wes and Jovin Levitt

Jean and Arnold Linderbaum in memory and honor of our parents

The Littauer Foundation

Jonathan and Wendy Mecklenburg in memory of Harry and Marilyn Mecklenburg

Richard and Bonnie Messerel

The Miriam Group

Morgan Joseph and Co., Inc.

Lawrence J. and Suzanne Pincus

The Novack Family

Jack Renick & Sons, Inc.

Frederick H. and Sandra R. Rose Foundation in honor of Judy T. Tenney

Helene Rubenstein Foundation

Amy & R. Sheldon Schachter

The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation

Dina Shohlman

In memory of Ruth and Norman Silverman, born not far from here

Sylvia Silber

Dr. Arvid Stawski

The Templer Family Foundation

Robert Zonies and Ben Korman

In memory of Mesulam

Jean-Adolphe Zundel

Arthur Zundel

Howard Zar in memory of Rose and Mayer Zar

Morton B. Zuckerman in memory of Arch and Anna Jacobs Foundation

The Joseph M. Zuckerman Foundation

The A.R. Zuckerman Foundation

The W. Alton Jones Foundation

The Krieger Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Friends of the Bee’ly Museum

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF ART AND CULTURE

1887 SOCIETY MEMBERS

Selma Herkin

Barbara and Milton Werker

Society members, past and present, and friends of the Museum of the American Jewish Experience, whose support made possible the acquisition, care, and exhibition of the nation’s largest body of Jewish material culture.
In recognition of the quality and significance of our historical, cultural and educational programs, and collections, the New York State Board of Regents granted Eldridge Street museum status. New interpretive spaces in the building showcase late 19th-century and early 20th-century artifacts in our collection to tell the story of Jewish migration to the Lower East Side. Our Gural-Rabinowitz Family History Center explores Jewish migration to America through the lens of the family. An inaugural exhibit in the Wilks Family Gallery tells the story of the restoration through photographs, artifacts and video interviews with artisans.

Exhibitions by the Numbers
- Gold MUSE Award for Interactive Installation from the American Association of Museums
- More than 100 examples of synagogues from around the world made accessible on our interactive History Tables
- 75-plus artifacts from our collection displayed, including Yiddish signs, spittoons, and the congregation’s early Constitution

Something Old, Something New
How do you integrate exhibits and cutting-edge technology into a Victorian-era house of worship to bring the story alive for people of all ages and backgrounds? Case in point: the Museum’s interactive History Tables located within our new Limud Discovery Center. Created by Potion Design, these elements elegantly blend technology and traditional materials to immerse visitors in immigrant life of 100 years ago and introduce sacred Jewish architecture and ritual to visitors—many of whom have never entered a synagogue. A favorite activity is the “Make Your Own Paper,” in which visitors assemble their own page of a Yiddish newspaper complete with feature story, letter to the editor and ad.

The Gural-Rabinowitz Family History Center is supported by a generous gift from the Gural and Rabinowitz Families | Aaron Gural Foundation | Paula and Jeffrey Gural | Barbara Gural | Jane Gural Sender | New Tudor Foundation | Grandchildren of Maurice Rabinowitz Span | Sun Hill Foundation. The Wilks Family Gallery was established by generous grants from the Wilks Family and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.
E ven in the midst of restoration, in 2007 the Museum opened to the public for a number of special programs exploring Jewish culture, immigration history and historic preservation. Architectural workshops, including our True or Faux program on paint restoration, provided an opportunity for participants to witness up-close this landmark restoration. The poignant mid-restoration condition of the sanctuary provided a meaningful backdrop to our Lost and Found Series which recalls Jewish musical traditions that are in danger of being lost. And, undaunted by the ongoing restoration, more than 3,500 people joined us for our seventh annual Egg Rolls & Egg Creams Festival—our most successful to date.

Cultural Programs by the Numbers

- 15 cultural events with 75 participating writers, historians, and performers
- 100 leading klezmer musicians gathered for a historic photo shoot at Eldridge Street and a 10-day series of statewide concerts
- 12,370 visitors, including a record-breaking 3,500 attendees at our Egg Rolls & Egg Creams Festival and 750 people at our Kidz for Kids concert

A Great Day on Eldridge Street October 12-21, 2007

More than 100 of the world’s most influential klezmer musicians assembled at the Eldridge Street Synagogue for an unprecedented ten-day series of concerts, lectures and educational events throughout New York State. The series kicked off with a photo shoot on the steps of the Synagogue, inspired by the iconic 1958 photograph "A Great Day in Harlem." This unique gathering of international musicians was conceived and led by violinst Itzak Perlman. Participants, who traveled to the Lower East Side from across the United States and around the world, included Jewish music pioneers Theodore Bikel, Don Byron, Adrienne Cooper, David Krakauer, Frank London, Andy Statman, Alicia Setgah and John Zmir.

A Great Day on Eldridge Street was funded by the New York State Music Fund, established by the New York State Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; and by the Geo Foundation and The Forward Institute.

GIftS OF $1,000,000 AND ABOVE
The Fund and Fahnreich families | Aaron Gural Foundation | Paula and Jeffrey Gold | Barbara Gold | Jaye Gural Fund | New Tabor Foundation | Grandchildren of Muster Fahnreich Spier | Sun Hill Foundation
The Mayor’s Office for the City of New York | The Trust | Michael Bloomberg | New York City Council | The Honorable Christine Quinn | New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

GIftS OF $500,000 AND ABOVE
Lower Manhattan Development Corporation | Manhattan Borough President’s Office | The Honorable Scott Stringer | New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation | Joanna S. and Daniel Rose | Joan Threeperson-Hoymann | Michael, Emma and Sam Weinstein | Nieman and Rasta Westover | Foundation in memory of Julian S. Perlmutter

GIftS OF $250,000 AND ABOVE
Joan and Robert Annen | Booth Ferris Foundation | Leo Rosner Foundation in loving memory of Anna and Leo Rosner

GIftS OF $100,000 AND ABOVE

GIftS OF $50,000 AND ABOVE

GIftS OF $25,000 AND ABOVE
In honor of the Adler Family | Joa and Susan Anderson and Family | Our friends Jay Ackerman, a cousin, a mentor, a muse of wisdom | The Lily Ackerman Foundation, Inc. | Gary and Aya Barat in memory of Rabbi Chaim Segalov | Abigael Rose and Michael L. Blum | in honor of Jacob and Nathan Blum | Seymour Cohen | Bonnie and Tony Starch in loving memory of our mother | Double H Foundation in honor of the Kenneth L. Sears family

Public Support

The restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue and the Museum’s cultural and educational programs would not be possible without the generous support of our elected officials and government agencies. For their support, we are grateful to the following:

Department of Youth and Community Development Institute of Museum and Library Sciences Lower Manhattan Development Corporation The Mayor’s Office for the City of New York National Endowment for the Arts National Endowment for the Humanities New York City Council New York City Department of Cultural Affairs New York City Manhattan Borough President’s Office New York State Council on the Arts Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
CONTRIBUTORS

Thank You

"One of my best events since I've been elected was the Egg Rolls and Egg Creams Festival on Eldridge Street."

—The Honorable Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President, December Rededication Ceremony

"The Museum has returned the grand, stained-glass-and-polished-wood-neo-Moorish-Yiddish-Romanesque-Renaissance-Gothic-You-Find-a-Name-for-It space back to its neighborhood and to New Yorkers. Walk down Eldridge Street now and you see the synagogue, almost hallucinatory in its luminosity..."

—Adam Gopnik, The New Yorker
TOURS & EDUCATION

Extensive planning went into the development of tours and educational programs that were re-launched with our December 2nd re-opening. A new tour script was created, incorporating rich historical material. Emphasis was given to ways the Eldridge Street Synagogue could serve as a vehicle for teaching and story-telling—as an aesthetic example, landscape of religious observance, and artifact of a dynamic place and period, the Lower East Side at the turn of the twentieth century.

Education by the Numbers
• 7,000 visitors in December, our first post-restoration month open to the public
• 40 teachers and docents participated in our teacher professional development program
• 98% of the participants in our professional development program found the content “informative and scholarly”
• 86% of teachers said that they would apply what they learned at Eldridge Street in the classroom

Where History Comes Alive
The Museum’s 2007 professional development program, with 40 participating teachers and docents, highlighted how Eldridge Street could serve as a powerful vehicle for teaching immigrant history and religious tradition in America. The eight-part series of workshops and lectures resulted in new K-12 curricula, educational resources and supplements for our docent training manual.

Leading American Jewish history scholars Jeffrey Gurock, Carol Herselle Krinsky, Tony Michels and Jeffrey Shandler lent expertise and gave lectures.

The Museum’s Docent and Teacher Professional Development Program was made possible with grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Rene Bloch Foundation, Elias A. Cohen Foundation, Lucia N. Littauer Foundation, New York Community Trust (LuEsther Mertz Fund), New York State Council on the Arts and Leo Rosner Foundation.

"This project illuminated the central place of religion in larger discussions on immigration, assimilation and the architectural history of New York.”

—Mary Ellen Lennon, Teacher at Bard High School Early College and participant in our Professional Development Program