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Mamdani orders historic Christian church to be demolished after arson

By Ben Tumulty The Post Millennium
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Brooklyn Christian Church



Muslim NYC official seals Mamdani plan to demolish historic Brooklyn Christian church destroyed in arson attack—despite church's attempt to save it

The New York City Department of Buildings has determined the church will be demolished,

overseen by practicing Muslim Ahmed Tigani, hand-picked by Mayor Zohran Mamdani. The church will be billed for the demolition.

Muslim NYC official seals Mamdani plan to DEMOLISH historic Brooklyn Christian church destroyed in arson attack—despite church's attempt to save it.

A 174-year-old Brooklyn church that was torched in a suspected arson attack is set to be demolished by the Mamdani administration after it rejected efforts by the congregation to preserve the historic building, which had landmark status and was built in 1853. Police are investigating the blaze "as an arson incident" and just before the fire began, a "person of interest" was seen running from the South Bushwick Reformed Church.

The devastating blaze at South Bushwick Reformed Church, located on Bushwick Avenue, required nearly 200 FDNY firefighters to fight the flames for more than two hours. Following the fire, church leaders asked the city to delay demolition while engineers evaluated whether the structure could be restored. They wanted to save at least part of it to retain landmark status.

According to the church, an independent structural engineer concluded the building remained structurally sound and could be repaired. The congregation also requested that demolition be postponed while preservation options were explored. These requests were unsuccessful. In a statement, Pastor John Steward said: "It is with extremely heavy hearts that the South Bushwick Church reports that, despite its best efforts, we have been informed that demolition of the remaining structures at 855 Bushwick will commence tomorrow."

To add insult to injury, the congregation is expected to foot the bill for its own demolition. Under city policy, South Bushwick Reformed Church will be charged for the cost of tearing down the historic structure, a sum likely to exceed the roughly \$15,000 raised through its GoFundMe campaign. Despite efforts from church leaders, engineers, attorneys and preservation advocates to save parts of the landmarked building, the city moved forward with demolition.

Preservationists warned the loss of the remaining structure could erase the church's landmark protections and clear the way for future redevelopment. As a result, it may have to be sold. A commercial broker told Brownstoner the site could be worth more than \$7 million as a development opportunity. The contract is suspected to be handed to Bushwick Realty Holdings LLC, a well-known Brooklyn developer that has experience with snapping up religious sites and owns an entire block across the street from the church.

The New York City Department of Buildings has determined the church will be demolished. The department is headed by Egyptian-American Muslim Ahmed Tigani, who was hand-picked by Mayor Zohran Mamdani. The decision to demolish the church comes despite ongoing fundraising efforts by the congregation, which launched a GoFundMe campaign after the fire in hopes of restoring the historic church. The campaign had raised more than \$14,000 as of last week.

The decision to demolish the church has drawn a backlash, particularly while investigators continue examining whether the fire was intentionally set. "NYC churches are routinely burning down now and the local pro-Islam, pro-third-world leadership are glad it's happening," Right Line news correspondent Eric Daugherty said on X.

Brownstoner reported that the local community is "absolutely devastated" by the destruction, "given the building's history and status on the Bushwick thoroughfare".

Built in 1853, South Bushwick Reformed Church traces its congregational history to the 17th century and is one of Brooklyn's oldest Protestant congregations. No arrests have been announced so far in connection with the fire investigation. Demolition of the historic church is expected to begin following the city's order.

