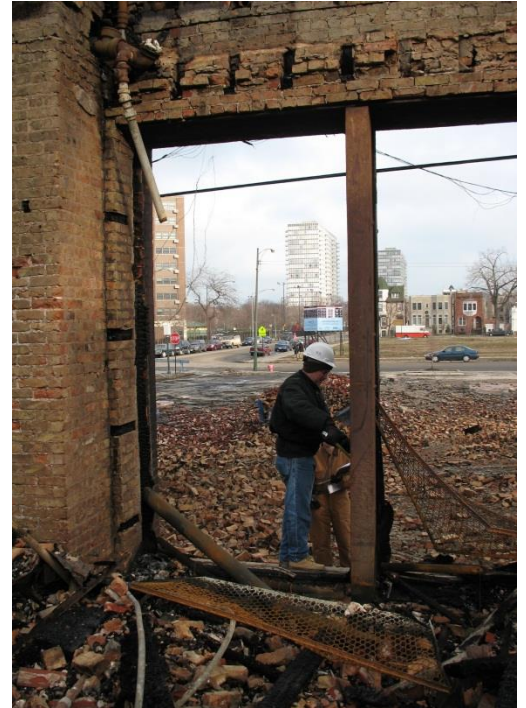
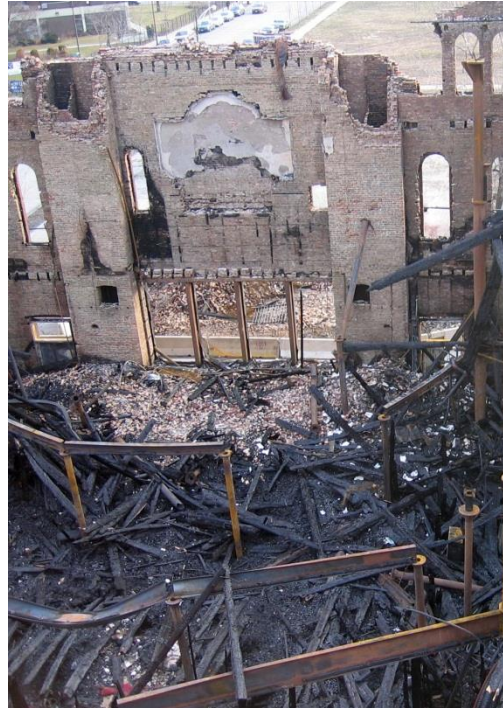




PROJECT PROFILE

Pilgrim Baptist Church

Post-Fire Stabilization | Chicago, IL



CLIENT

City of Chicago

Pilgrim Baptist Church

BACKGROUND

The Pilgrim Baptist Church is a historically significant structure designed as the Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv Synagogue (the Congregation of the Men of the West) in 1890 by the firm of Adler and Sullivan. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1981.

The building suffered extensive damage during a major fire that occurred in January 2006. Almost the entire interior of the structure above ground level was destroyed by the fire and ensuing collapse. The destruction of the interior structure of the church building left the remaining exterior historically significant masonry walls in an unsupported condition when exposed to wind loads. The City of Chicago retained WJE to assess the damage and to develop a program to provide for public safety.

SOLUTION

For the City of Chicago, WJE performed a limited structural analysis, finding that while the exterior walls were stable under their own self-weight, the walls in their post-fire condition were unable to resist the wind loads specified by the Chicago Building Code. WJE developed a safety zone concept that provided for public safety while also allowing for partial reopening of an adjacent, major thoroughfare to vehicular traffic.

After providing for public safety, WJE continued as structural and preservation consultant to Pilgrim Baptist Church. To retain as much of the historic masonry as possible, WJE designed a facade retention system to stabilize the remaining walls against wind loads. Window and door openings were shored against gravity loads. The debris on the interior of the church was documented by WJE and removed. Significant historic fabric and material sensitive to the church was salvaged, catalogued, and stored on-site for use in the rebuilding and restoration efforts.

The documentation of the remaining damaged structure, and due concern for stabilization of the walls and basement structure in their present state, will allow for their reuse in the future. WJE continues to act as consultant while Pilgrim Baptist Church fundraises to restore the stabilized walls and reconstruct the former church building.

