



2016 Board of Directors

Carol Loewenson FAIA LEED AP
President

David Piscuskas FAIA LEED AP
First Vice President / President-Elect

Jennifer Sage FAIA LEED AP
Vice President for Design Excellence

Jane Smith AIA IIDA
Vice President for Professional Development

Gerard F. X. Geier II FAIA FIDA LEED AP
Vice President for Public Outreach

Jack Travis FAIA
Secretary

Mark C. Regulinski AIA
Treasurer

Paul A. Bello PE
Director for Development Affairs

Lia Gartner FAIA LEED AP
Director for Educational Affairs

Ashok Raiji Assoc. AIA PE LEED AP
Director for Industry Affairs

F. Eric Goshaw AIA LEED AP
Director for Legislative Affairs

Illya Azaroff AIA
Director for Programs & Strategic Planning

Barbara E. Spandorf AIA LEED AP
Director for Publications

Laurie D. Kerr FAIA LEED AP
Director for Sustainability

Michael Szivos Assoc. AIA
Associate Director

Jeffrey C. Shumaker
Public Director

Brian McGrath
Public Director for Educational Affairs

Elizabeth H. Kubany
Public Director for Professional Affairs

Thomas A. Heyer
co-Director for Student Affairs

Jonathan J. Ngo
co-Director for Student Affairs

Tomas J. Rossant AIA
Immediate Past President

Stephanie Gelb FAIA
Alternate Director for Design Excellence

Venesa Alicea AIA LEED AP BD-C
Alternate Director for Professional Development

Faith Rose AIA
Alternate Director for Public Outreach

Benjamin Prosky
Executive Director

Testimony before the New York City Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises on Zoning for Quality and Affordability

February 10, 2016

Good afternoon, Chair Richards, members of the City Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, and members of the City Council. My name is Benjamin Prosky, and I am the Executive Director of the American Institute of Architects New York and the Center for Architecture. I am pleased to offer testimony in regard to the Department of City Planning's Zoning for Quality and Affordability proposal.

The American Institute of Architects New York represents over 5,200 architects and design professionals, and is committed to positively impacting the physical and social qualities of our city, while promoting policies beneficial to the welfare of our members. We have reviewed the Department of City Planning's recent amendments to the Zoning for Quality and Affordability (ZQA) proposal and believe these revisions are responsive to previous discussions. ZQA will help facilitate the construction of affordable and senior oriented housing, offer architects flexibility to create better buildings that are more responsive to local contexts, spark the development of housing on empty lots, and decouple the creation of housing from parking requirements, thereby encouraging the use of mass transit and enabling a sustainable city. The proposed zoning text and recent amendments can improve the quality of life for New Yorkers and increase economic activity within the architecture, engineering, and construction markets, bolstering the creation of jobs.

We appreciate the updates that the City Planning Commission made to the proposal last week. The proposal promotes the following beneficial outcomes:

- **More retail spaces in commercial districts.** A higher ceiling at the ground floor allows for retail at the base without giving up rental units in buildings with sufficient floor area;
- **Better residential spaces with adequate ceiling heights.** An increase in building height allows for increased ceiling heights, encouraging more light and air in residential units;
- **Aging in place.** The senior population is increasing dramatically in NYC, and many seniors want to stay in their neighborhoods. By encouraging more dedicated senior buildings, ZQA takes a step forward to create a city that allows for aging with dignity;
- **Reduction in parking requirements to decrease housing costs and create more dwelling units.** Parking lots, especially at senior buildings, are largely underutilized and could instead provide additional apartments, community spaces, or outdoor amenities. If the City's public transportation expands as proposed, greater housing density could be realized without the traditional corresponding increase in parking provisions;
- **Relaxed density caps and minimum apartment size.** The flexibility provided by the proposal will allow for the creation of more compact unit housing, as well as a variety of housing types, to accommodate the City's changing demographics;
- **Visual variety to the streetscape and reemergence of familiar features in New York City's architectural history.** The proposed text amendments allow for greater flexibility in design and construction. For example, front courts and bay windows not only enhance the streetscape but improve natural ventilation. Over time, neighborhoods throughout the city can better exemplify architectural diversity, reflecting the diversity that underpins the social fabric of New York.

As the approval process for ZQA continues, we hope the dialogue – and outcome – will reflect the strong link between enhanced vitality and accessibility of the streetscape, especially in the instance of better quality ground level spaces for retail and general public use, with the growth and availability of affordable housing throughout the City.

The two pillars of the initiative – Quality and Affordability – are interdependent and linked. We urge you to examine how this laudable initiative will impact individual districts and other City policies. Specifically, we believe more discourse should be given to the following:

- **Public education**
- **Infrastructure including mass transit**
- **Sustainability**


Over the last year, we have participated in discussions about ZQA and its implications for NYC's neighborhoods. We have hosted public programs with DCP at the Center for Architecture to inform the design community about the upcoming changes; organized a charrette-style working session to analyze and illustrate the ways the amendments will alter the way we design buildings; solicited input from architects in all five boroughs; compiled case studies to show how the zoning changes will improve senior housing development, create more dynamic building envelopes, and improve streetscapes; and spread the word through publications, articles in our e-newsletter, and mentions in social media outlets.

In short, we continue to support the advancement of these amendments through the review process.

Submitted on behalf of AIANY.



Benjamin Prosky
Executive Director



Carol Loewenson, FAIA
2016 President

The American Institute of Architects

AIA New York
536 LaGuardia Place
New York, NY 10012

T (212) 683 0023
F (212) 696 5022

www.aiany.org