



## AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of  
The American Institute of Architects

### **AIA New York Chapter Testimony Concerning Intro. 257**

April 26<sup>th</sup> 2004

by Mark Ginsberg, AIA

Members of City Council and the Committee of Housing and Buildings, my name is Mark Ginsberg and I am President of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. I am speaking today on behalf of the Chapter.

Our organization, with 3,500 architect and professional members, feels that City Council Intro.257 has good ideas, but requires further study before enactment which should occur with the adoption of the new Building Code. The proposed legislation would require emergency lighting and exit signs in all new apartment buildings and in all existing apartment buildings by January 1, 2007. When my firm designs housing we recommend to our clients that we put emergency lighting and exit signs in the building, as I know many members of our Chapter do. I also personally experienced the value of emergency lighting in the blackout, and the problems when this lighting did not work.

These changes will raise the cost of housing, as have many previous code changes. This increased cost should be reflected in increased budgets for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and the New York City Housing Authority. Sadly previous Code changes made by the Council have not been coupled with increased budget for these agencies; reducing the production of affordable housing. We need to be very careful to study the cost and benefits of code changes. They are suggested with the best of intention and are often worth the additional cost. Other solutions may be better or have lower initial and/or maintenance costs, for example photo luminescent tape may be a way to achieve the proposed legislation goals.

With the Councils participation and support the City has been going through a process of adopting the International Building Code with amendments. This code requires exit signs and emergency lighting in residential buildings. We would suggest that the issues in this legislation, particularly the requirement of retrofitting existing buildings as part of this larger upgrading of our Building Code. This would permit these idea be studied in the entirety of an updated Building Code allowing for improved life safety in the most cost effective manner.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.