

5 December 2007

Hon. Amanda M. Burden, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, New York 10007-1216

Dear Chair Burden,

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, representing over 4,000 architect and affiliate members is here today to testify in favor of the proposed zoning changes at the ConEd site. We support the general idea of the plan, which allows greater density on the site and mixed-use development.

It makes sense to us that the general large scale development allows for an exemption from the usual bulk, setback and yard restrictions, making it possible for the public plazas and other open space to be located in a more flexible manner and permitting some existing buildings to remain without interfering with the overall plan. We also find it reasonable to change the ConEd site's zoning from manufacturing to commercial, with one portion being changed from C1-9 to C5-2, allowing greater density. With inclusionary housing being added to the site, we also support the exception to the usual limit of FAR 10 and the several other specific allowances for exclusions of floor area and community facilities in the overall FAR. In general, we support the proposed change of zoning to allow mixed use and more dense development, obviating standard zoning restrictions applicable for bulk and open space.

A "general large scale development" with provisions for inclusionary zoning clearly has been the result of years of negotiation and discussion between the Department of City Planning and the community. As the project goes forward, the process must be transparent and have adequate community and public input as to the specifics of the plan made possible by the zoning approvals under discussion today. Specifically, we look forward to hearing more about the topic of parking and of the massing and design of the residential towers.

We support the zoning changes that will allow for development of more housing, more open space and greater density in an area that can handle this development and applaud the effort to link the site to the East River waterfront. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the consideration of this exciting zoning plan that will lead to the transformation of an underutilized area into a major civic asset.

Yours truly,



Joan Blumenfeld, FAIA
President



Fredric Bell, FAIA
Executive Director