

AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of
The American Institute of Architects



The American Institute of Architects New York Chapter Supports Adoption of the International Building Code New York City Council Housing and Buildings Committee Friday, June 24 2005

I am Mark Ginsberg, AIA, 2004 President of the AIA New York Chapter, the founding Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, representing 4,000 architects, professional affiliates, and public members. We support the Bill before you, intro 478-A for the initial adoption of the IBC, specifically the administrative and plumbing code. Members of our Chapter who are involved in the process of the adoption of the IBC will be talking to you today. I would like to talk about how we have gotten to this point, the process that the Department of Buildings has undertaken, and why we strongly support the adoption of a modified IBC for New York City.

After the horror of September 11th our Chapter led the formation of New York New Visions, a pro-bono, multi-disciplinary organization representing New York's design community, to develop positive recommendations for how we could best rebuild Lower Manhattan and our city. One of the recommendations was to adopt a model building code. New York City's current Building Code was last comprehensively updated in 1968 and is out of date, has a confusing organization, and often has ambiguous definitions. The adoption of a model code with a three-year cycle of updates will give New York City both a state-of-the-art code and a process to keep it current. This code will be modified to reflect New York's unique density, and maintain building safety for New York's urban environment, while reflecting the realities of developing sites in the City.

The model code in question is the International Building Code, which has been widely adopted by jurisdictions throughout the country. Although I may be a parochial New Yorker, adoption of a well organized code with clear language will create both safer, higher quality buildings and encourage economic development.

We applaud Mayor Michael Bloomberg; Patricia Lancaster, FAIA, Building Commissioner; and the Chair of this Committee, the Honorable Madeline Provenzano, for leading the effort to adopt a model code. The process of review and adoption that New York City has undertaken is unique; an inclusive process that colleagues around the country highly praise. By asking more than 400 design and construction professionals representing a broad array of stakeholders to review every line of the IBC and every line of our current code, we are combining the best of what we have with the best of what has been adopted nationally. Many experienced professionals have donated tens of

thousands of hours to develop a consensus document. The process is not done, but it is moving ahead and the adoption of the legislation before you will set a timetable for completion. New York will have the best code in the country. Current New York City regulations that are more stringent than the national code will be incorporated into the new Code. These include the recently adopted changes based on specific response to the World Trade Center Disaster and the New York City Code's place of assembly chapter. Regulations to encourage construction of affordable housing are also under discussion. Code officials around the country are looking forward to our amended version of the IBC code. I predict many of our amendments will be adopted nationally.

Finally, it has been a long-term goal of the AIA to have one model building code in the country modified to suit the special conditions of each locality. The IBC code is that code, an amalgamation of the three National Model Codes. It has been completely or partially adopted in 47 states, including New York State, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. This code's clarity, organization and system of updating will allow us (the professionals) who use it to do a better job.

You have heard and will hear from many other respected professionals about the legislation before you. We at the AIA New York Chapter look forward to continuing our work with you and the Department of Buildings on this historic effort to modernize our City regulations to help us build safer and better buildings. We strongly support the legislation, Intro 478-A that you have before you. I would be pleased to answer any question you may have.

Thank you.