

## **THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS NEW YORK CHAPTER SUPPORTS ADOPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODE**

I am Mark Ginsberg, President of the AIA New York Chapter, the founding Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, representing 3,700 architects, professional affiliates, and public members. We support the "Blueprint Bill" for the adoption of the IBC that you have in front of you today. 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 11<sup>th</sup> our Chapter led the formation of New York New Visions to develop positive recommendations on how we could better rebuild Lower Manhattan. 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 New York City's current Building Code was last comprehensively updated in 1968 and is out of date. The adoption of a model code with a three-year cycle of updates will give New York City both a cutting edge code and a process to keep it current. Finally, although I may be a parochial New Yorker, adoption of a well organized code with clear language that has been adopted by almost all states will create both safer, higher quality buildings and encourage economic development.

We are glad that the Mayor; Patricia Lancaster, FAIA, Building Commissioner; and the Chair of this Committee, Madelyn Provenzano, accepted the challenge to adopt a model code. The process of review and adoption that New York City has undertaken is unique; a 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 end up with 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 allowing for additional building 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, you have two different proposals before you. The first is the IBC code, an amalgamation of the three National Code organizations which has been completely or partially adopted in part in 47 states, including New York State, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, and which is being reviewed by the committees of construction professionals to be modified for New York City. The second is NFPA-5000, a largely untested code, which has just been un-adopted by Phoenix, Arizona, the one jurisdiction in the country that adopted it. This code would be adopted without any modifications to make it work in New York City Adoption of this code would make us out of step with the rest of the United States and potentially put us at an economic disadvantage with other jurisdictions. Model codes are written to be customized by local jurisdictions and the adoption of NFPA-5000 without local customization will have disastrous implications of yet unknown proportions in the design, construction and real estate industries. The Mayor's Commission on a Model code has already reviewed both codes and code organizations in great detail and the commission recommended that the I-Codes, not NFPA-5000, be the basis of the new code. This recommendation was previously accepted by City Council and by the Mayor. Adopting NFPA-5000 would be snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory and would push us back instead of ahead.

You have heard and will hear from many other respected professionals about the legislation before you. We at the AIA New York Chapter looking forward to continuing to 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 "Blueprint Bill" legislation that you have before you.