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April 21, 2016

Carl Weisbrod, Chair
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Dear Chair Weisbrod,

The American Institute of Architects New York represents over 5,000 architects and design professionals throughout the five boroughs, 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 Water Street Upgrades Text Amendment proposal and believe these revisions will be mutually beneficial to property owners and community members. By requiring owners to upgrade plazas when they choose to activate their arcades, these upgrades will help to create higher quality public spaces for commercial and residential tenants.

Despite significant growth in the Water Street area, the privately owned public spaces, or POPS, in question have failed to adequately serve the neighborhood. The arcades and plazas remain desolate on nights and weekends. Retailers struggle to attract new business. Spaces are inaccessible and unusable. Even building owners that would like to redesign the spaces face technical and administrative barriers that prevent them from making physical improvements.

In order for this rezoning to succeed, quality design is essential. In addition to improving the corridor's physical aesthetics with more plantings, seating, and access to light and air, the resulting arcades and plazas will meet ADA standards and New York City's resiliency requirements for the flood zone. The redesigned spaces must together create a cohesive yet varied environment. Concurrent projects, including the Streetscape Improvement Project, will assist in the Street's overall design.

Although it could take years for each site to reach its full potential, the stakeholders that take advantage of this opportunity will leave a visible and lasting impact on the city.

Sincerely,



Carol Loewenson, FAIA