

Chair Dan Garodnick
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271

May 15, 2024

RE: AIA New York Testimony to the City Planning Commission on the Bronx Metro-North Station Area Plan

Dear Chair Garodnick,

American Institute of Architects New York (AIANY) writes to express our support for the Bronx Metro-North Station Area Plan. Established in 1857, AIANY represents more than 5,000 architects and design professionals committed to positively impacting the physical and social qualities of our city.

The MTA's Penn Access project will create four new Metro-North Stations at Co-op City, Morris Park, Parkchester/Van Nest and Hunts Point along the existing Amtrak corridor connecting underserved sections of Eastern Bronx with Penn Station to the south and north along the Metro-North New Haven Line. To facilitate mixed-use commercial and residential development adjacent to the new Morris Park and Parkchester/Van Nest transit stations, NYC Department of City Planning initiated the Bronx Metro-North Area Plan which would rezone areas near these transit hubs.

The Hunts Point and Co-Op City station areas will receive infrastructure investments but no zoning changes under the plan. In Morris Park and Parkchester/Van Nest, the plan would create up to 7,500 new homes, including 1,900 permanently affordable units through Mandatory Inclusionary Housing in Bronx Community Districts 9, 10 and 11. Most would be in Parkchester/Van Nest, along currently existing commercial corridors by adding residential uses to those areas. AIANY strongly supports the goals and provisions of this zoning proposal.

This proposed zoning action will connect land use and mobility through transit-oriented development, which AIANY has long supported. The fine-grained zoning changes will create opportunities for higher density mixed-use residential, commercial, and retail development at Parkchester/Van Nest and strengthen the regional medical care and research hub at Morris Park with direct access to regional public transit. By providing access to jobs and housing along the underutilized Amtrak right-of-way with its mostly manufacturing/industrial uses, it will direct development in a way that protects the character of the existing neighborhoods nearby while allowing for growth around the transit stations.

While separate from the citywide City of Yes Housing Opportunity zoning proposal, this neighborhood plan shares several of its goals – increased residential density closest to transit access, Mandatory Inclusionary Housing requirements and elimination of parking mandates for new housing developments. These measures create more affordable, healthier, and sustainable communities.

We recognize the robust outreach and engagement that DCP has undertaken with the local communities over many years which was validated by a favorable vote by 2 of the 3 local community boards with jurisdiction as well as from the Bronx Borough Board and Bronx Borough President prior to this CPC hearing. We urge DCP to continue this community outreach.

Finally, AIANY urges DCP and other city agencies to work together to leverage the full potential of this rezoning by making public investments in critical infrastructure – including open space, streetscape improvements, schools, libraries, basic services like power/sewer/water and public safety. This coordinated land use and transportation planning approach will serve as a model for thoughtful urban planning that can be replicated in TOD planning around the 19 new transit stations along the MTA’s future Interborough Express line (IBX) that will connect Sunset Park Brooklyn with Forest Hills Queens and the neighborhoods in between.

Sincerely,

Jesse Lazar
Executive Director, AIA New York

AIA New York Transportation and Infrastructure Committee