

American Institute of Architects New York Testimony for the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing

February 27, 2025

Thank you, Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow, and Members of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, for holding this hearing today. I am Bria Donohue, Director of Government Affairs at American Institute of Architects New York (AIANY). We represent more than 5,000 architects and design professionals committed to positively impacting the physical and social qualities of our state.

AIANY commends the Legislature for their commitment and partnership in addressing the ongoing housing and affordability crises in New York by enacting meaningful policies and providing critical funding last year, such as lifting the Floor Area Ratio cap, creating the Affordable Housing from Commercial Conversions Tax Incentive Benefits Program, extending the 421-a Tax Incentive, replacing 421-a with the Affordable Neighborhoods for New Yorkers Tax Incentive Program, authorizing accessory dwelling units, and enabling a basement apartment pilot program.

In an effort to truly maximize the potential of these tools, we encourage the Legislature to enact policies that create a statewide strategy to unlock housing opportunities in transit rich neighborhoods and eliminate burdensome barriers to development caused by parking mandates and onerous environmental review.

We applaud Governor Hochul for her demonstrated commitment to affordable housing in the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026, notably with a \$25 billion investment in a five year housing plan to create and preserve 100,000 affordable homes; \$1 billion contribution to the commitments made in City of Yes for Housing Opportunity and City for All plan; increased investment in Pro-Housing Communities with \$100 million to address infrastructure upgrades and \$10.5 million for technical assistance for designing pro-housing policies for local communities; and \$50 million for “Resilient and Ready” capital grants to assist homeowners impacted by extreme weather events.

We need every neighborhood and community across the state to do their part to address our housing needs. To do so, AIANY urges the legislature to pass the following bills to streamline the environmental review process, enable transit-oriented development, and eliminate parking mandates.

[S925C](#) (May)/[A4933A](#) (Kelles) – 2023: Streamlines the environmental review process for sustainable housing.

Building off New York City’s Green Fast Track for Housing, which streamlines the environmental review process for small and midsize sustainable residential development projects, S925C/A4933 takes a similar approach to addressing the burdensome environmental review process, eliminating hundreds of thousands of dollars and years off a project. By reforming SEQRA, projects will be able to get online faster, helping to address the supply challenges more efficiently.

[A06670](#) (Solages) – 2023: Directs municipalities to enable transit-oriented development by permitting denser residential constructions within a half mile of a rail station or bus stop/station.

Transit-oriented development is an important tool to increase housing stock, encourage use of public transit, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote local economic development, and increase social and economic mobility for New York’s population across the state. In New York, we have the privilege of having the nation’s most robust mass transit system, making a policy like transit-oriented developed well positioned to make a meaningful impact and provides an opportunity for every neighborhood to do their part to address our supply needs. Additionally, it is essential for a transit-oriented development program go hand-in-hand with eliminating parking mandates, as they detract from the intended outcome of a TOD policy by restricting the units it would unlock and encourage car usage even in transit rich areas.

[S162](#) (Hoylman-Sigal)/[A5700](#) (Kelles) – 2023: Prohibits local exclusionary zoning measures like parking mandates.

A critical obstacle for residential projects is parking mandates. It is a proven exclusionary zoning practice that is outdated, complicated, and costly, causing many projects to not pencil out or reduce the number of units in a project to include the required parking. The [New York Times](#) did a deep dive on a site in Crown Heights, Brooklyn where a project with 328 units was required to have 193 parking spots. Not only is this incredibly expensive with the cost of construction per spot ranging from \$10,000 to \$70,000, but there are structural constraints that require expensive reinforcement to accommodate the spatial demands of parking lots.

We look forward to working closely with the Legislature to unlock tools to deal with our communities’ housing crisis and appreciate your consideration of our recommendations. Thank you!