



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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COUNCIL TO VOTE TO STIFFEN CONSEQUENCES FOR NEGLIGENT BUILDERS *Council to landmark historic, working-class housing complex*

City Hall – February 1, 2007 – Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn and members of the City Council will today vote on four pieces of legislation that will:

- Crack down on architects and engineers who falsely certify that building permit application plans are compliant with the building code and zoning restrictions;
- Require the Department of Buildings to review all plans certified by an architect or engineer who has been placed on probation by the state;
- Designate two of Manhattan’s City and Suburban Homes buildings as landmarks; and
- Approve five City appointments.

Council Speaker Quinn will also introduce legislation to ensure that domestic partners are granted the same benefits the City offers to married couples as well as a technical lobbying amendment to protect children of lobbyists.

Self-Certification Plan Bills

Continuing in its efforts to improve construction safety in New York City, the Council will vote on legislation aimed at cracking down on incompetent or unscrupulous architects and engineers that falsely certify plans in applications for building permits. The Council will also vote to require the Department of Buildings to fully review any plans submitted by architects or engineers who have been placed on probation by the state.

Said **Speaker Quinn**, “Today we will end abuse of our building system by unscrupulous architects and engineers who bring unsafe development to our neighborhoods. Our legislation will stiffen the penalties for violators and require the Department of Buildings to provide much-needed review of applications prepared by architects or engineers who are on probation. Together, we continue to improve building safety in New York City.”

“For some time now, the Council has been concerned with the performance of certain individuals who professionally certify plans with the Department of Buildings,” said Housing and Building Committee Chair **Erik Martin-Dilan**. “The passage of these two bills will help address some of those concerns and lead to better building practices throughout New York City.”

“These pieces of legislation are a positive step towards reigning in architects and engineers who routinely file non-compliant building permits, and who have been a thorn in the side of neighborhoods across New York City,” said Council member **James Vacca**. “We must preserve the character of our neighborhoods,

and by forcing chronic violators to undergo departmental examination before being granted permits, we are making progress in achieving this goal.”

“The antiquated versions of ‘self-certification’ have gone unchecked for far too long,” said Council member **Michael Nelson**. “As President James Madison said in the Federalist papers: ‘If men were angels, no government would be necessary.’ We are not angels; we must serve as checks and balances. These laws serve to finally add some real consequences for those builders who chose ignore the law.”

City and Suburban Homes Landmark

The Council will vote to landmark the two eastern most buildings in the First Avenue Estates, part of City and Suburban First Avenue Estate, located between East 64th and 65th Streets from York Avenue to First Avenue. Built between 1898 and 1915, City and Suburban Homes was an innovative solution for safe, affordable housing; these developments vastly improve the quality of life for New York’s working poor by creating courtyards, stairways, hallways and apartment configurations to maximize light and ventilation.

In 1990, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) voted unanimously to designate this entire block of fifteen buildings, known as City and Suburban First Avenue Estate, located between East 64th and 65th Streets from York Avenue to First Avenue. The LPC also voted to designate the City and Suburban York Avenue Estate, which is further to the north, on East 78th and 79th Streets, between First and York Avenues.

Months later, the Board of Estimates voted to remove the designation from the four eastern most buildings of the York Avenue Estates and the two eastern most buildings in the First Avenue Estates. The Council’s action today will reverse this mistake and will landmark City and Suburban Homes as a whole.

Council member **Jessica Lappin** said, “By landmarking City and Suburban Homes, we are taking steps to right a wrong and save a part of our city’s history. City and Suburban Homes created a better way of life for the working poor and they did it by creating this full city block development of light-court tenement buildings. That is worth remembering, preserving and celebrating – not just some of it – but all of it, in its entirety and forever.”

“I am proud that we were able to right this wrong, after sixteen years,” said Land Use Committee Chair **Melinda Katz**. “I congratulate Council member Jessica Lappin for her commitment to protecting this part of our city’s history.”

Lobbying Registration Law Amendment

Council member Simcha Felder will introduce a technical amendment that would protect the home addresses of lobbyists’ and the names and addresses of their spouses, domestic partners, and unemancipated children from being publicly disclosed. While lobbyists would be required to report such personal information when a campaign contribution is made in the name of a lobbyist’s spouse or unemancipated child, this information would be protected from public access so others who may oppose their views cannot target their families based on political or ideological affiliations. Campaign contributions made by lobbyists, their spouses, domestic partners, or unemancipated children would remain ineligible for public matching funds.

Domestic Partners for Full Equality Bill

As a strong supporter of equal rights for all New Yorkers, Speaker Quinn will introduce the Domestic Partners for Full Equality bill to guarantee all domestic partners in New York City equal access to City benefits and services. This bill, co-sponsored by Council members Maria Baez, Rosie Mendez and Bill

deBlasio, requires that any benefit or service directly provided by the City of New York to persons based on spousal relationship shall also be fully available to persons who are domestic partners.

Said **Speaker Quinn**, “Through hard work and activism, New York’s LGBT community has come a long way in the last few decades. We have passed laws on gay rights, domestic partnership, and transgender civil rights. While we continue to fight for the full right to marry, this legislation proactively ensures that in New York City, whatever married couples are entitled to, domestic partners will be entitled to as well. Since we cannot anticipate what benefits might be available down the road, this legislation would ensure that we will not have to fight for equal rights and access every time a new City benefit or service is available.”

“The introduction of this Domestic Partnership bill is imperative to ensure that couples registered as domestic partners are equally afforded the same benefits and services provided by the City of New York,” said Council member **Maria Baez**. “I wholeheartedly believe that by ensuring equality for couples in spousal relationships and registered domestic partners, we also constructively prohibit discrimination.”

“When a segment of the population is denied even one benefit under the law, simply because of whom they choose to love, something is wrong,” said Council member **Rosie Mendez**. “The Domestic Partner for Full Equality Bill will begin to right that wrong.”

“New Yorkers who are in domestic partnerships deserve the very same benefits and protections that married couples receive,” said General Welfare Committee Chair **Bill deBlasio**. “This bill marks an important step forward in ensuring we guarantee equal rights for all New Yorkers.”

City Appointments

The Council will also vote to approve the appointments of Lauvienska Polanco to the Taxi & Limousine Commission as well as Nathanal Leventhal, Richard W. Eaddy, Betty Y. Chen and Alfred C. Cerullo, III to the Department of City Planning.

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