THE ACCIDENTAL SKYLINE

Hot off the press is the Municipal Arts Society’s third in a series of reports on New York City’s accidental skyline. The Municipal Art Society (MAS) is a venerable organization founded in 1893 as an advocate for the enhancement of the built environment through excellence in urban planning, architecture and preservation.

The current report quantifies the “unprecedented boom in as-of-right, out-of-scale development” which has created a more random skyline. The more traditional taller avenue buildings and lower scale cross street of the Manhattan grid have given way to super-tall mid-block high rises and frenzied development on the waterfront. The MAS report carefully examines this phenomenon by presenting detailed shadow projections, air rights maps and endangered view corridors. It proposes a package of ten reforms aimed at empowering the City by leveling the playing field between private development and the public interest.

It should come as no surprise that half of the reforms involve zoning and environmental review. MAS calls for strengthening regulations that control bulk and heights together with clarifying zoning regulations and definitions. For example, the supertall luxury residential tower at 432 Park Avenue added 19 additional floors of mechanical and structural voids which resulted in an additional 313 lineal feet of height. Not only are these areas exempted from floor area calculations, they served to make the building the tallest while providing sought
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Photo: ©2012 Flicker - MET Roof, Phil Davis. Modified by MAS to show proposed development.
TAX REFORM: WHAT IT MAY MEAN FOR YOU

The tax reform “framework” that the White House and Congressional Republicans released at the end of September proposed reducing the tax rates on individuals and businesses and making the tax code simpler. The bills in the House and the Senate largely follow the path established in the Framework. On the House side, the plan would compress the current seven tax brackets to five. For corporations, the plan would lower the rate from the current 35 percent to 20 percent. On the Senate side, the seven tax brackets are kept but rates are lowered for both businesses & consumers.

To pay for this, both plans would eliminate a large number of tax incentives. They also predict strong economic growth to help increase revenue to the government.

The devil, of course, is in the details. And that is where the biggest impacts may lie, particularly for architecture firms that organize as pass-through entities like S Corporations. The Framework proposed creating a new, lower maximum tax rate for these type of firms. However, both the House and Senate proposals exclude professional services companies, such as architecture firms, from tax relief.

The House Ways and Means Committee has approved its version of the bill, which now goes to the House for a vote. Meanwhile, the Senate Finance Committee introduced its draft proposal on November 9. It began marking up the bill Monday, November 13. Both versions will need to be reconciled and sent to the President. The White House and Congressional Republicans hope to get a bill signed by the end of the year.

The good news is that the legislation specifically calls out several building-related incentives for keeping, notably the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and the Mortgage Interest Deduction. The bad news is that other incentives, like the Historic Tax Credit, energy tax incentives like 179D, and others, are on the chopping block.

Losing financing tools like the Historic Tax Credit combined with potential tax increases on small architecture firms would be a double whammy on the profession.

In 2013, AIA adopted three broad principles:

- Support comprehensive tax reform that lowers marginal tax rates for individuals, pass-through entities, and corporations, while broadening the tax base and simplifying the tax code.
- Tax policies aimed at strengthening small businesses, including tax policies that maintain the ability of businesses to choose pass-through forms of entities, should be preserved.
- Tax policies should provide incentives for innovative, economically vibrant, sustainable, and resilient development that creates jobs and will revitalize our nation’s buildings and infrastructure.

Join AIA’s Legislative Action Network (LAN) and receive up to date information on this and other key issues. You also can make your voice heard now by sending a letter to your members of Congress to urge them to protect the Historic Tax Credit and the 179D green building tax incentive, ensure tax rate fairness for architecture firms.

“A doctor can bury his mistakes but an architect can only advise his clients to plant vines.”

– Frank Lloyd Wright

“I hate vacations. If you can build buildings, why sit on the beach?”

– Philip Johnson

“Louis Kahn

“The Sun does not realize how wonderful it is until after a room is made.”

– Louis Kahn
October 19, 2017

QUESTIONS EMAILED PRIOR TO MEETING:

Q 1. What are the new requirements for TPP1 as per Int. No 936-A (see attached)? Specifically, how should we address item “3. Health requirements. Specification of means and methods to be used for control of dust, disposal of construction debris, pest control…” Shouldn’t the means and methods fall under the direction of the contractor and not the Architect signing and sealing the TPP1?

A 1: The Means, Methods, Technics and Schedule of Construction for a TPP are the responsibility of a licensed design professional.

Attendees suggested the TPP become a separate filing or possibly a separate special inspection item.

Q 2. What scope of work would be considered partial demo? The replacement of an interior staircase within the existing opening?

A 2: The replacement of an interior staircase is partial demolition since it is structural.

DEMO LITION. Full or partial demolition.
Full demolition. The dismantling, razing or removal of all of a building or structure, including all operations incidental thereto.
Partial demolition. The dismantling, razing, or removal of structural members, floors, interior bearing walls, and/or exterior walls or portions thereof, including all operations incidental thereto.

Attendees disagreed and stated that if the staircase was replaced within the existing opening and no structural components are removed that would not constitute partial demolition. Commissioner Gluckman will discuss at the next Commissioners’ meeting in Manhattan and advise examiners of the outcome.

Q 3. Plumbing inspector objection issue. Plumbing inspector raised objection for shower in cellar of two-story and cellar detached office building (all floors are U.G. 6, incl. cellar) located in R-41/C2-3 district, not a flood area – APPROVAL FROM BOARD REQUIRED.

When I met with the inspector he insisted that there is a document allowing showers for medical and executive offices, however nobody in the Plumbing division was able to specify the document.

I have few questions:
- Why do they act without knowing the specifics and what should I do then?
- If such document exists why isn’t DOB providing a convenient search system so that their staff and public can access it?
- Why has it become common for Plumbing inspectors to govern architectural plans like in this case?

A 3: Need more info to answer this question. Attendees raised multiple questions related to plumbing inspections and Schedule B. Attendees requested the Chief Plumbing Inspector attend the next Industry meeting.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

New L2 application: NRV – No relation to violation will no longer be accepted for single ownership buildings, only exceptions are co-op and condo.

Commissioner Gluckman introduced many new Local Laws, check DOB website for access to the latest Local Laws.

QUESTIONS AT THE MEETING:

Q 4. How long does re-assignment take?

A 4: A couple of days, staff is backlogged.

Q 5. The C of O division is requesting copies of the initial TR1 and TR8 at time of Letter of Completion submission along with the final TR1 and TR8. The initial TR1 & TR8 are already accepted in the required items and are already B Scan, why are we being asked to submit copies?

A 5: Commissioner Gluckman will inquire with the C of O division.

- John Hatheway, AIA
LONG ISLAND’S ARCHI AWARDS

Brooklyn was well represented last night at Long Island’s Archi Awards given last night. Giuseppe Anzalone, AIA, AIA Brooklyn’s past president was one of the jurors pictured here along with directors from the Long Island chapter as well as members from the Queens Chapter and members of the AIA New York State Chapter Board.

– Giuseppe Anzalone, AIA

Photo courtesy of Willy Zambrano AIA VP of Knowledge at AIANYS.

WELCOMING A NEW AIA BROOKLYN MEMBER

In order to get to know our new members a little better, we asked them some questions. Welcome Joshua Gerber, AIA.

Q. What motivated you to become an architect?
A: I can trace my interest in Architecture back to a book my parents purchased for me in elementary school - David Macaulay’s Castle. The book contained detailed illustrations and cross sections of what seemed like imaginary structures - it really captured my imagination. Eventually I went on to study Art History, which overlapped into Architecture a great deal.

Q. What type of work are you most interested in?
A: At the moment I enjoy workplace design, and the direct impact it has on so many New Yorkers’ daily lives. There is an immediacy in the work, and the fast turnover makes projects exciting in the short term, and satisfying in the long term.

Q. What is your biggest challenge since becoming an architect?
A: Finding a balance between technical knowledge, design expertise, and project experience. Because I’m still relatively new to the career.

Q. What did you like best about architecture school?
A: Camaraderie between classmates is not only beneficial and vital. The rigor of a graduate architectural program can take a toll.

Q. Any criticisms of the architecture educational process?
A: I do wish my program had spent more time on technical, or practical experience. Some graduate programs facilitate the actual construction of student designs. I feel it’d be beneficial to strike a better balance between design and technical knowledge.

Q. What are your professional goals?
A: In a broad sense - to become vital to the creation and completion of a project. I have a wide range of skills - both intellectual and practical - and finding an avenue to use both is important to me.

Q. Who do you consider to be some of your favorite architects?
A: I find the grandeur and material innovation of Herzog & DeMeuron inspiring. The craft and minutiae of Kieran/Timberlake speaks to me in a different way.

Q. Do you have a favorite building or city?
A: I also studied French as an undergraduate, and would be remiss to say that Paris never ceases to amaze me - the perfect mixture of urbanism, style, and croissants. On a smaller scale - the medieval city of Uzès in Provence captures the imagination that few remaining places in Europe still do.

Q. What do you hope to get out of your AIA Brooklyn Chapter membership?
A: To meet some like-minded folk with a passion for design, history, and Brooklyn’s architectural future/heritage.

- Pamela Weston, Assoc. AIA
continued from page 1

after palatial apartments that look down on the rest of the city. The use of a structural void is the 2017 equivalent to the floor area bonus plaza of the 1970’s and 80’s.

Similarly, the Domino Sugar project initially called for a new park, a school and 2200 residential units, of which 660 were affordable. When the project was purchased by a second developer, the affordable units were reduced to 440. To keep the original 660 affordable units, the City allowed an increase in heights to the buildings, thereby giving the developer an additional (and very valuable) 200,000 gross square footage atop the floor area that had been approved in the 2010 rezoning. MAS is also critical of the environmental review processes which too often underestimate impacts and, in the case of Hudson Yards do not reflect the full amount of development that was approved in the 2005 Environmental Impact Statement. At Hudson Yards dozens of separate land use applications have been approved since the initial rezoning. Some were subject to environmental review and have resulted in bulk waivers or floor area increases. The result was an increase of the equivalent of three Chrysler Buildings. In downtown Brooklyn, approximately one million square feet of recent development was not evaluated in the 2004 EIS. The resulting traffic congestion, public school overcrowding and lack of recreational space in downtown Brooklyn is not being addressed by developers or government.

The circumvention regulations established by Urban Renewal Areas (URA) and Large Scale Residential Development (LSRD) is nowhere more blatant than at the Two Bridges LSRD area in the Lower East on the East River. In 2016 the City Planning Commission classified changes to the LSRD as “minor” which exempted the plan from a ULURP, the review process for Urban Renewal area. The minor change includes four towers with 2.5 million sf of residential space and 600 new residents. The exemption from ULURP is extremely disturbing in the context of City Planning’s rejection of The Plan for Chinatown and Surrounding Areas: Preserving Affordability and Authenticity, a community based plan that was “too expansive” and not sufficiently nuanced on a block by block basis.

The Accidental Skyline report is critical of the City’s on-line resources which do not sufficiently alert the public about real estate transactions and land use actions until the development planning process has been completed. There is no way to obtain information on non-discretionary actions.
such as zoning lot mergers and transfers of development rights.

Real estate development and architectural design in New York City have been transformed during the last decade. The maximization of floor area has been pushed aside in the pursuit of height. The cost of building structural void spaces and oversized mechanical areas is paid for many times over with the sales of the upper most floors.

Examples of extremely expensive apartments abound: the 83rd floor at Herzog & de Meuron’s Jenga-like tower sold for $47 million this year.

In short, The Accidental Skyline makes a persuasive case for change. Height and bulk regulations need to be strengthened and enforced, zoning and building laws need to be clarified, floor area bonuses evaluated, and mitigation requirements of environmental review should be made meaningful. The public must be part of the process by increasing resources and opportunities for community planning. Keep in mind that Community Boards were created as “community planning boards” so that communities could have a voice in what was being built in their neighborhoods.

As architects, we need to join the effort to make the City and developers accountable to the public interest.

- Jane McGroarty AIA

For the full report:
THE AIA BROOKLYN CHAPTER MEMBERS ARE FOREVER CHANGING

OUR CHAPTER’S NEWLY LICENSED MEMBERS!
Stephen Conte, AIA
David Theisz, AIA

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS!
Rami Abou-Khalil, AIA
Mr. Ariel Akrab, AIA
Mr. Benjamin J. Bischoff, AIA
Samy Brahimy, AIA
Robert Bundy, AIA
Mr. Marcus R. Carter, AIA
Mr. Tom Coronato, AIA
Andrea Elias, AIA
Ms. Andrea L. Fisk, AIA
Joshua Gerber, AIA
Fareez Giga, AIA
Ms. Amy Howell, AIA
Young Kang, AIA
Yeon Soo Kim, AIA
Mr. Alexander Korsmo, AIA
Mr. Trevor Lamphier, AIA
Mr. Shuping S. Liu, AIA
Mr. Come Menage, AIA
Ms. Karen M. Miller, AIA
Christopher Moy, AIA
William Nathans, AIA
Catharine Pyenson, AIA
Leon Rost, AIA
Mr. Adam J. Ruffin, AIA
Taka Sarui, AIA
Ms. Katie Shima, AIA
Mrs. Susan J. Sloan, AIA
Christopher Stoddard, AIA
Mr. Eliot F. Stulen, AIA
Mr. Joshua A. Vizzi, AIA
Miss Sarah Witkin, AIA
Samira Yaghmai, AIA
Mr. Shao Wen Deng, Assoc. AIA
Mr. Michael S. Howard, Assoc. AIA
Miss Veda Kesarkar, Assoc. AIA
Mr. Adam J. Koogler, Assoc. AIA
Mr. Hamilton R. Lopez, Assoc. AIA
Mr. Mengfan Lou, Assoc. AIA
Ms. Lucia M. Márquez, Assoc. AIA
Charles Mc Candless, Jr., Assoc AIA
Miss Sohee Moon, Assoc. AIA
Ms. Samantha E. Okolita, Assoc. AIA
Felipe Oropeza, Jr., Assoc AIA
Ms. Raquel Richter, Assoc. AIA
William Scott, Assoc AIA
Olga Whitmoyer, Assoc AIA
Ms. Polley Wong, Assoc. AIA

Jamie Cardinale a 2017 Brooklyn Architects Scholarship Foundation scholarship recipient.
REGULARLY SCHEDULED
CHAPTER MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are scheduled at:
Committee Meetings: 5:30 PM
Dinner: 6:00 PM
Program: 6:15 PM

General Meeting
Wednesday,
December 13, 2017
AIA Holiday Party
6:30pm - 10:30pm
Liberty Warehouse,
260 Conover Street, Bklyn, NY 112311
You can purchase tickets @
www.AIABrooklyn.org

Executive Meeting
Wednesday,
December 6, 2017

AIA learning unit credit and certificates towards
NYS mandatory continuing education
will be given for each program.

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December 13, 6:30pm - 10:30pm
Liberty Warehouse,
260 Conover Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231
Buy tickets at:
www.AIABrooklyn.org/01-2/
Questions - 718.797.4242 or
AdminDirector@AIABrooklyn.org

LIVING IN AMERICA:
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, HARLEM,
AND MODERN HOUSING
Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery,
Columbia University, 615 West 129 Street
Through December 17
“Living in America” part of a manifesto
that was written on wooden panels
traveling with the model of Frank Lloyd
Wright’s Broadacre City (1929–58),
evokes a question that preoccupied
architects and planners throughout the
mid-twentieth century.

NEVER BUILT NEW YORK
Queens Museum
September 17 - February 18, 2018
Never Built New York, invites visitors to
discover the New York City that might
have been through original prints,
drawings, models, installations, and
animations. While it may be impossible
to re-imagine New York, Never Built
explores a city where you could catch a
football game in Manhattan, travel via a
floating airport, and live in an apartment
also acting as a bridge support.

FROM FULTON FERRY:
BUILDING DOWNTOWN
BROOKLYN
September 28, 2017 - Spring 2018
New York Transit Museum
Boerum Place & Schermerhorn St,
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Traces the roots of Downtown
Brooklyn all the way back to 1642,
when the first commercial ferry
slip between Long Island and New
Amsterdam opened at the end of
Old Fulton Street. Using archival
photographs and objects from the
Museum’s extensive collections

GOOD FENCES
MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS
October 12, 2017 - February 11, 2018
Good Fences Make Good Neighbors, an
exhibition stretching all five boroughs,
by artist and human rights activist, Ai
Weiwei. The citywide art installation
transforms a security fence into an
artistic symbol of the international
migration crisis and the current
geopolitical landscape.

Includes over 300 sites across New York
City including flagpoles, lampposts, and
bus shelters. Here are 10 places you can
view the various installations:
10. Gilded Cage in Central Park
9. Arch at Washington Square Arch
8. Circle Fence at the Unisphere
7. Five Fences at The Cooper Union
6. Exodus at Essex Street Market
5. Bowery Fence at 248 Bowery
4. Chrystie St. Fence at 189 Chrystie St.
3. 7th Street Fence at 48 East 7th St.
2. Banner 2 on 56th Street
1. Harlem Shelter 1 at 110th Street
www.publicartfund.org/ai_weiwei_good_
fences_make_good_neighbors

GORDON MATTA-CLARK:
ANARCHITECT
November 8, 2017 - April 8, 2018
The Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York 10456
Best known for his monumental cuts,
holes, apertures, and excisions to the
facades of derelict homes and historic
buildings in New York, New Jersey,
Chicago, and abroad, Gordon Matta-
Clark’s work conveys a potent critique
of architecture’s role vis-à-vis the
capitalist system. Taking as a point of
departure the pivotal series of “cuts”
produced in the Bronx in the early
1970s that led to his further exploration
of the city as a field of action.