

July 9, 2024

AIA New York Testimony to the City Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises on the Bronx Metro-North Station Area Plan

My name is Jim Wright, a transportation architect and urban designer speaking on behalf of the American Institute of Architects New York (AIANY).

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, the City 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 existing commercial corridors by adding residential uses to those areas.

AIANY strongly supports the goals and provisions of this zoning proposal which links local, city, and regional land use and mobility goals through transit-oriented development.

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 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 for 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 will create more affordable, healthier, and sustainable communities.

We recognize the robust outreach and engagement that the City and MTA have 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. We urge local Councilmembers, DCP, and other City agencies to continue this community outreach.

AIANY further urges that DCP and other city agencies 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. By lifting up our neighborhoods with more sustainable housing options while also connecting our residents to job opportunities, services, and recreation locally and beyond, the coordinated land use/transportation planning approach of the Bronx Metro-North Plan serves as a model for thoughtful urban planning throughout the city.