



March was a productive month for AIANY's advocacy efforts

April 07, 2014 - Design / Build

By Lance Jay Brown, FAIA

March was another busy and productive month for the AIA New York chapter's advocacy efforts. On March 19th, we made our annual lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., for the 2014 Grassroots Leadership and Legislative Congress. We convened for three days to empower our collective voice, speak with those in the halls of congress, and share our vision of what America can be - through design.

This year, our delegation met with the offices of congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, congressman Charles Rangel, congressman Jerrold Nadler, and congressman Gregory Meeks. All of the issues we discussed were met with support and encouragement. We were pleased to have the chance to discuss our legislative priorities for architects local and nationally.

We discussed the following legislative items of importance to AIANY in 2014:

- * Extending Important Incentives for Design: Our delegation recommended that extending and making modest improvements to the Energy-Efficient Commercial Building Tax Deduction (179D) would encourage new construction and renovation and support small businesses.
- * Improving Government Procurement to Help the Economy: We discussed how sharp cuts to design and construction budgets make it more important than ever that procurement laws ensure design firms have fair access to the federal marketplace, and asked our Representatives to support the Design-Build Efficiency and Jobs Act (HR2750).
- * Investing in the Next Generation of Leaders: We advised elected officials to support the National Design Services Act (HR4205) to extend architecture graduate students debt relief in exchange for work in underserved communities. This would help kickstart the careers of young architects while simultaneously benefiting communities in need.
- * Good Samaritan Legislation: We discussed how in the aftermath of natural or man-made disasters such as Superstorm Sandy, protections need to be afforded to architects and other volunteers who provide professional services at the direction of a public official. This legislation is currently moving through the State government, but we hope to bring it to a federal level as well.

All were excited to hear about the Center for Architecture and the building-related issues in their districts. Many of their districts are still recovering after Superstorm Sandy, so issues of resiliency were at the forefront of the conversation. We met with AIA National leaders and forged new relationships, especially related to our resiliency initiatives, which will prove fruitful in the month to come.

Over 120 attendees gathered on March 31st for the "Regional Recovery Working Group Workshop," co-organized by the AIANY, the AIANY design for risk and reconstruction committee, AIA New York State, AIA New Jersey, and the New York Institute of Technology. Participants shared experience

and case studies of recovery efforts across the region, highlighted good practices, noted changes to building codes, and updates to state and federal procedures. A third workshop, highlighting transportation and infrastructure, is planned for late May 2014.

Our advocacy efforts will continue throughout April, when we will be meeting with NYC department of transportation commissioner Polly Trottenberg to discuss MTA post-Sandy recovery, the expansion of bus rapid transit, and Vision Zero. We are also working to meet with the newly-appointed NYC department of parks and recreation commissioner Mitchell Silver and the director of the housing recovery office Amy Peterson.

On March 26th, Palaces for the People: Guastavino and the Art of Structural Tile, an exhibition presented in partnership with the AIANY, opened at the Museum of the City. A day after, Polis: 7 Lessons from the European Prize for Urban Public Space [2000-2012] opened at the Center for Architecture. This exhibition, organized by the Center of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB), recognizes and encourages the creation, recovery, and improvement of public spaces in cities. Throughout 2014, these two institutions, along with the Spitzer School of Architecture at City College, will be hosting exhibitions and programs that celebrate Catalan architecture in New York City under the banner "BCN-NYC Bridge." Defined by their street grids and waterfronts, Barcelona and New York are also distinguished by the passionate devotion of their dwellers to the life of the city. There is not a better opportunity than now to learn about the connections between these two great cultural capitals. Stay tuned to our calendar of events for upcoming programming.

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