



Tech is transforming CRE along with the policies and regulations governing it - by Lori Raphael

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The commercial real estate industry is experiencing a remarkable transformation, propelled by the rapid advancement of technology. From smart building to data analytics, innovative solutions are coming along faster than ever and are revolutionizing the way we buy, sell and manage commercial properties.

Smart buildings, for example, integrate cutting-edge technologies to enhance efficiency and occupant experiences, and are advancing faster than we can practically keep up with. Data analytics empowers our decisions and allows us to use information better. And PropTech has been a game-changer for the commercial real estate sector, with a range of digital innovations. We in the industry might not have seen some of these advances coming in recent years, but it's incumbent on us now to keep ahead of the curve and up-to-date if our industry is to succeed in these challenging times.

But do you know where else we've seen completely unexpected technology-related issues pop up in recent years? In city government and the policies that govern our operations. And now it's equally incumbent upon us to be aware of the range of new and ever-changing (and growing number of) policies and regulations that are moving through the public process.

Take electric vehicle charging for example. Even just five years ago, electric cars were something of a novelty in New York City and no one was really focused on policy issues around the technology....and certainly commercial building owners weren't. Now, however, we are directly engaged in a major policy conversation – with long-term impacts – around New York City Council legislation to require electric vehicle charging infrastructure in every parking garage in the city. BOMA New York has been engaged with the bill's sponsors, along with our partners at REBNY, to discuss ways to best approach this issue with the concerns of our members in mind and we're hopeful that it will result in the most workable final bill possible.

Similarly, we have proactively initiated conversations with the fire department and their policy team on an issue/technology that almost no one saw coming pre-pandemic: electric bike battery charging. As we all know, the pandemic generated an incredible surge in the use of e-bikes and many of our buildings are now home to bike storage rooms that now must accommodate e-bikes ridden to work by tenants. Yet there are inherent safety issues related to charging the batteries for these bikes, as tragically seen in the growing number of battery fires in New York City. And so while virtually all of these to-date have been in residential settings and involve improperly charged, aftermarket or damaged batteries, we have a responsibility to ensure that any spaces in our buildings that accommodate e-bikes are operated within NYC policies and the FDNY's best practices, which is why we have reached out and engaged.

The reality is that as technology continues to evolve, the commercial real estate industry stands on the brink of further transformation. While embracing these advancements offers tremendous opportunities, it also calls for a proactive approach to adapt and leverage technology effectively. Professionals in the field must stay informed, take advantage of new tools and platforms, and foster collaboration. So, too, must they be aware of – and engaged in – relevant policy making at the city, state and federal levels and be prepared to undertake the same level of collaboration. We've

already seen New York City government take initial steps to engage on a policy level with technologies that are likely in our future, from biometrics to AI, and so we ignore them at our peril. We must continue to try to anticipate what's around the next technology corner, in both our industry and government, if we are to succeed and thrive in an increasingly challenging landscape.

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