

With the change to the N.Y.C. Zoning Resolution allowing joint living-work quarters for artists, many questions have arisen regarding the requirements of the Buildings Department in regard to existing and new renovations of buildings. The Architects Committee of the SoHo Artists Association has met and will continue to meet with the Buildings Department and other agencies in an attempt to clarify the regulations which apply to buildings in this area.

Preliminary discussions indicate that, with few exceptions, filing of plans and obtaining of Certificates of Occupancy can be processed under existing legislation. Buildings can be classified in one of three ways:

1. AIR - Building with two or less families in residence. Does not require filing of plans or change in C of O. Minimum fire and health standards. AIR will be extended to apply in M1-5A and M1-5B zones.
2. Old Code and Multiple Dwelling Law - Non-fireproof buildings up to six stories or 75 feet when under 3000 square feet per floor. Code less rigorous than new code. Includes article 7B of the Multiple Dwelling Law which eliminates many restrictions.
3. New Code and some portions of Multiple Dwelling Law - buildings which do not come under AIR or Old Code or where extent of alterations is over 60% of the building value.

The applicable classification will depend on the structural, physical and occupancy characteristics of the individual building.

Plans of buildings (except those with AIR) must be filed with the Buildings

Department. These plans must be filed by a licensed Architect or Engineer and the written authorization of the owner must be given. The general procedure is as follows:

Plans of construction and plumbing showing existing and new work are filed. These plans are then examined and approved at which time a building permit is issued. At various times during construction, inspections are made. At the end of construction, the work is approved and a Certificate of Occupancy is applied for and obtained if required. Most buildings filing under the old or new code will require a new C of O. The examination checks for conformity to N.Y.C. Zoning Code, N.Y.C Building Code (old or new), N.<sup>4</sup>.S. State Multiple Dwelling Law. The basic purpose of the Zoning Codes is to provide for orderly growth in the city. The Building Codes are to promote safety from fire and structural failure. The Multiple Dwelling Law is intended to prevent slum conditions and deals with health and safety standards. Buildings which are multiple dwellings can come under rent control.

Inspections during construction are to see that the work done actually conforms to the approved plans. In addition to those of the Buildings Department, inspections may be made by the Department of Water Supply, Gas & Electricity, Fuel Oil, Elevator, Sprinkler, Fire and Health Depts.

In order to obtain a building permit, the applicant must have obtained sufficient insurance under the Workmans Compensation laws.

All work, whether existing, under construction or planned, with or without approvals, is expected to conform to Buildings Dept. standards. However,

given the special nature of the district and the fact that most work that has been done has resulted in the upgrading of non-conforming conditions in the direction of compliance and that artists' occupancy has reduced the number of occupants and the floor loads, it can be expected that there will be certain considerations made to allow existing work. The major consideration in examining of these buildings will be fire safety and ease of egress under emergency conditions.

This material is meant only to be a general guide. Each building is an individual case and must be considered accordingly. It is recommended that any persons wishing to undertake any construction obtain professional advice on its legality before starting. All non-conforming work done at this time will most likely have to be removed. We would recommend that no major new work be undertaken until the procedure for the newly-formed zone is firmly established by the Buildings Dept. Work filed at this time should be accompanied by an affidavit stating that it is understood that approval is subject to further amendment as legislation is clearly established.

This is a new situation and there will be much confusion among all concerned until all those involved can adjust. Patience in this transition period will be helpful. Since there will be repetition of many problems, they can best be dealt with through the Architects Committee. It is important that we receive feedback from all those involved in this process in order that everyone knows of decisions made which might affect them. Please do not call the Buildings Dept. with individual questions. They are not staffed or set up to answer questions from non-professionals. Questions should be channeled through individual architects and the Architects Committee. This procedure should minimize confusion on everybody's part and speed up approvals.

It is likely that a large portion of SoHo will be designated as a Historical District. This would mean that building alterations would be subject to review for appropriateness of exterior changes (only those portions visible to street). This is important if you are considering fire escapes or repairs or replacement of facades.

The Architects Committee is working with Citizens for Artists Housing on the revisions of certain codes to make them more applicable to the specific problems of artists housing.

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