IN THE LINE OF
FIRE
NEW JERSEY
CONSTRUCTION CODES
It is hard to believe we are already beginning the second quarter of 2015. The year commenced with a rousing start, beginning with our Installation Dinner at the Englewood Field Club. Special thanks to our Regional Director Robert Cozzarelli, AIA for installing the 2015 Officers and Trustees, and to Terry Durden for planning and hosting a fun-filled event.

Congratulations to our Trustees Award winners Bill Martin, Ralph Rosenberg and Matt Fink for their contributions to the League in 2014, and also to Ben P. Lee, AIA, the newest recipient of the Vegliante Award for his work in promoting the organization and the profession.

Our February meeting featured a presentation on the 9/11 Memorial Museum in Manhattan by Carl Krebs, AIA, partner at Davis Brody Bond. In March we held a joint meeting with the Urban Land Institute, featuring a forecast by Jeffrey Otteau on the economic and real estate trends in New Jersey, a topic very relevant to our profession.

Coinciding with Architecture Week, our April 16 meeting will be at the LEED certified Bolger Community Center in Midland Park. Philip Wells will give a presentation on the building, followed by a presentation of his humanitarian work in rebuilding Haiti.

Save the date for the Architects League/Newark & Suburban Architects Annual Trade Show on Thursday, May 7 at the Glenpointe Marriott in Teaneck! We encourage our members to make the effort to be there and meet our vendors. It is also important that our Member Firms allow staff to get away on that day for a seminar or two and attend the late afternoon show.

The AIA National Convention will be held in Atlanta, May 14-16 featuring keynote speaker, President Bill Clinton. Register now at convention.aia.org if you plan to attend.

The League is excited to announce we will be holding a joint Design Awards event with Newark & Suburban in June. Further details will be forthcoming as the event nears. The evening will also honor our 2015 Scholarship Award recipients.

This past March, Bryan Pennington, Terry Durden and I attended the 2015 Grassroots Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. Each year AIA Component Leaders visit Capitol Hill to meet congressional representatives and advocate for issues affecting the profession. This year we are asking Congress to support the National Design Services Act, oppose repeal of historic preservation tax incentives and to support incentives for building codes that promote resiliency.

AIA National has announced that 2015 is “The Year of the Advocate” with the goal to connect members, support components and prepare future advocates. AIA has also launched the new marketing and social media campaign: #ILookUp. At the local level, the Architects League is doing our part, increasing our social media efforts, supporting our members through our educational programs and events, and by reaching out to our emerging professionals to promote the individual and professional benefits of AIA membership.

You, too, can reap the benefits of your AIA membership by attending a meeting and participating in our events. I look forward to seeing you!

Best regards,
Paul S. Bryan, AIA
ALNNJ President 2015

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Architects League of Northern New Jersey

2 Leagueline 2Q 2015
In December 2014, a building in the DaVinci apartment complex in downtown Los Angeles, containing 526 dwelling units, caught fire and was completely destroyed. The heat from the blaze damaged nearby buildings and highway. In January 2015, at the Avalon complex in Edgewater, NJ, over half of the 408 apartments also burned down. The similarities between these building and what happened to them are compelling; both were residential buildings constructed of lightweight wood framing, known as Type 5 construction, built to the very limits of height and size that are possible with that type of construction. Both fires also became rallying points for people calling for a review of the building codes.

In New Jersey, a bill to require the re-evaluation of the appropriateness of lightweight wood framing, and a moratorium on construction of such buildings has already been introduced into the state legislature. In Princeton, a group of officials including the mayors of Princeton and Edgewater have called for a reconsideration of an approval given to Avalon Bay to build an apartment complex there that is similar in construction to its buildings in Edgewater.

That there should be such intense interest in these fires by the public is not surprising considering how relevant they feel to most of us. The majority of us live in lightweight wood structures, whether they are detached houses or apartment complexes, and we can all too easily imagine a similar fire in our own home. Also, there has been an increase in large residential buildings with wood frame construction. Developments in engineered wood products, such as I-joists and OSB have made greater spans possible, and with an increased focus on environmentally friendly construction, wood is looked on as a benign, renewable material. Avalon Bay, just one of many developers of large scale residential complexes, has built buildings in twelve states, with twenty in New Jersey alone. Ultimately though, how far reaching will any changes be; what buildings and construction types will be involved? As a starting point, we can look at the bill currently before the legislature.
THE LEGISLATION

On February 12, a bill, #4195, was introduced to the NJ state legislature to require the evaluation of the use of light frame construction for multiple-family dwellings, and to impose a moratorium on the construction of any such buildings until the evaluation is complete.

The bill defines light frame construction as “… means any method of construction utilizing metal-plate-connected wood trusses, metal-plate-connected metal-web wood trusses, pin-end connected steel-web wood trusses, wooden I-joists, steel bar joists, solid-sawn wood joists, or composite wood joists as floor or roof system structural elements.”

Further, the bill charges the commissioner of buildings with determining “… whether light frame construction is an appropriately safe method of constructing multiple dwellings, focusing specifically on the potential hazards that light frame construction poses in the event of a fire.”

The proposed actions to be taken by the commissioner range from amendments to the current codes to introducing a separate light frame sub-code to prohibiting light frame construction altogether for multiple-family dwellings.

The bill also proposes that “… there shall be a moratorium up to two years on approving or commencing, or both, new construction of multiple dwellings utilizing light frame construction until such time as the commissioner determines the appropriateness of utilizing light frame construction for multiple dwellings and either deems it inappropriate or adopts standards for light frame construction …”

Finally, the bill notes that it is in response to the fire in Edgewater and that “The incident highlighted the extreme speed with which light frame construction … can reach its failure point when exposed to fire. The fire chief in Edgewater blamed the wood construction and truss-style roof for the fire’s rapid spread.”

As currently proposed, the bill may be somewhat ambiguous; the definition of light frame construction covers many particular types of light wood framing, but does not mention light gauge metal framing (presumably intended to be included), which is included in Type 5 construction. More problematic however, is the inclusion of steel bar joists, which are a common feature in other construction types, most notably Types 2 and 3. Additionally, by defining light frame construction solely by the elements of the floor and roof construction, there is the question as to whether the bill is intended to cover Type 3 construction, which uses non-combustible (typically cmu) wall construction, paired with light weight framing for the floors and roof (The required fire ratings for floors, roofs, and primary structural frame are the same for Types 3 and 5 construction). Presumably, a clarification will be made prior to the bill being voted upon, as there would be a sizeable change in the number of buildings affected.

In regard to the buildings that will be included, as defined by use, the bill is quite clear; multi-family residences, such as apartment buildings are covered, while other types of residential occupancies such as hotels, townhouses and single- and two-family houses are not.

THE CURRENT BUILDING CODE

Like most other states, New Jersey bases its building codes on the International Building Codes (formerly the BOCA codes) which have been developed, put to the test, and improved over many years. More recent additions include such requirements as sprinkler systems throughout multi-family residential buildings and attaching placards to the exteriors of buildings, alerting firefighters to the presence of wood framed truss construction. A review of the basic structure of the codes may provide some thoughts for additional improvements.

The building codes categorize buildings both by their use and their construction type. The use allows the code to distinguish between buildings that might be difficult to evacuate during a fire, such as theaters (large numbers of people in a small area) or hospitals (people who need assistance) and buildings that present a special danger, such as munitions factories, from buildings that are easy and quick to evacuate, such as offices. Residential buildings, which contain people who may be sleeping, fall somewhere in the middle.

The distinction between construction type is based on whether the materials used are combustible, and the fire-rating, or how long the building can withstand fire before failing. Naturally, light wood framing, Type 5 construction, has the lowest fire-ratings. It is important to note that the fire-ratings are not the maximum level of safety that can be achieved by the construction type, but rather, the minimum level that is required by code. Type 5 construction has two sub-categories; 5-A, or protected, in which many of the building elements must be 1-hour fire-rated, and 5-B, or unprotected, in which none of the building elements need to be rated.

Once the building use and construction type are determined, the maximum size of the building both in height and floor area is prescribed by the code. Because of its greater fire-ratings, Type 5-A construction is allowed to be taller and larger that Type 5-B.
There are several means by which the size of a particular building can be increased. First is providing extra clearances and access around the perimeter of the building, which results in an increase in the floor area. The maximum additional size that may be obtained from providing additional clearances is 75% additional floor area. Second is providing sprinklers throughout the building, which results in increases to both the height and the floor area. The allowable increases for providing sprinklers are one additional floor in height and 200% additional floor area. Clearly, the code places quite a lot of faith in the effectiveness of sprinklers to reduce the spread of fire.

Beyond the limits described above, the code allows buildings to be subdivided by fire walls which have a high fire rating, typically 2 hours. The building is then considered two separate buildings, each of which can be built to the maximum size allowed by code. In this way, the floor area of a building, though not its height, can be extended theoretically without limit. For most construction types, these fire walls must continue up through and above the roofs, providing a complete separation of the buildings on either side. In Type 5 construction, fire walls only need to extend to the underside of the roof, which is allowed to be continuous across the top of the wall. In response to the Edgewater fire, Avalon Bay stated that it would construct the fire walls in future buildings of masonry, instead of the typical wood framed walls with multiple layers of gypsum board.

Looking forward

There are several possible areas in which the code may be revised, and while there is no prediction as to which changes may ultimately be adopted, some potential possibilities might include:

- Reduction in the allowed increase in building size given for providing sprinklers. The reasoning behind this is that sprinklers, while proven effective at stopping or slowing fire in spaces where they are located, have very little impact of fires that have accessed the cavities around the framing in walls, floors and roofs that typifies light frame construction. According to preliminary reports, this is exactly how the fire in Edgewater started and grew out of control.
- Further subdivide Type 5 construction, with the new sub-types having higher fire ratings. Currently, the highest required rating for Type 5 construction is 1-hour, whereas it is very easy to provide higher ratings by simply providing additional layer of gypsum board to walls and ceilings. The result would be that the smaller light frame multi-family buildings would remain much the same as they are now, and the mid-size and larger buildings would have greater levels of protection.

Looking at the sub-division of buildings to the point that they are considered separate, provides us with additional possibilities for improvement. Simply put, the fire walls constructed to provide separation between adjacent buildings must be able to perform as required. The fact that fire walls in Type 5 construction are not required to continue up through and above the roof as is required in other construction types may mean that they are not capable of providing the expected level of protection. Fire walls that do extend past the roof would also provide a visual indication on the exterior of the buildings to fire fighters as to the location of the walls, assisting their efforts in successfully stopping a fire.

The points listed above concern themselves directly with the requirements of the code. Now let’s also think about the construction of buildings. Construction errors, even small ones can present critical dangers to the construction of light framed buildings, which rely so heavily on the layer of protection that gypsum board provided to the framing. Small errors which can be missed during visual inspection can have outsize consequences later. Help in inspecting the effectiveness of fire-rated assemblies, especially fire walls, can be borrowed from the technology that has been developed to make buildings more energy efficient. Pressure testing is used to measure, locate and reduce air leakage through the building envelope. This same technology could be used to help determine the quality of the construction of fire walls. If pressure testing indicates movement of air from one side of a fire wall to the other, then there are deficiencies in the construction of the wall, which can be located and remedied prior to the occupancy of the building.

A final possibility, outside the jurisdiction of the building code, is financial incentives for building safer buildings. Highly publicized incidents such as the Edgewater fire increase awareness of the issues among the public who buy or rent in these buildings. As with any other building amenity, increased safety could become a reason for paying a higher rent or price. Requirements for disclosing building safety information to renters/buyers could be written into real estate law. Insurance costs for builders during construction, and owners once the building is completed, vary according to the construction type and relative safety of the building. Discounts are available to builders who provide additional safety measures, such as fire retardant coatings, during construction. Disclosure of this information could also help renters/buyers, when choosing where to live.

The possibilities outlined above would have cost implications for the construction of light framed multi-family buildings, as would an outright ban. Clearly, a long period of discussion is beginning, which will include many stakeholders; code officials, law makers, building developers and owners, and the general public. This will be a discussion in which architects are knowledgeable and should be willing to take part.
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A Lightweight Construction Materials - The Public's Perception

by Justin A. Mihalik, AIA, 2015 AIANJ President-Elect

As a result of the AvalonBay fire in Edgewater, I was interviewed by PIX 11 news as a representative of AIANJ for the Architect's perspective on lightweight wood construction materials and if they are in fact "safe". As Architect's we understand that the building code takes into consideration the use group of a building as well as the construction type of materials to determine how then to protect or not protect the materials being used, as well as requiring or not requiring fire sprinklers in order to meet a minimum standard and to be considered "safe". But what is the public's perception of safe? After all as Architect's it is our responsibility to design "safe" buildings. In watching many Youtube videos and reading white papers on the subject as I prepared for the interview, I found that the public's perception of engineered lightweight materials, mainly wood I-joists, is that they are "cheap". There are a few reasons for this, one being the material used for the web of the I-joint, which is oriented strand board or OSB, and that it appears to be a wafer board material, second is that after a fire, not much of a structure built with these materials is still standing. Being interviewed at the AvalonBay site, it did not take an experienced eye to see that the stair towers and elevator shafts that were constructed of masonry concrete block were the only structures standing amongst a sea of wood debris and that the masonry concrete block was far superior to the wood because it had survived the fire. As Architect's we also understand that the building code does not care if the building is standing after the fire, only that its occupants were able to escape in a safe manner. The public does not understand that this is in fact the way the building code works and that it is up to the designer and the owner of the building to design it in such a manner that it potentially can withstand a fire. So is the public wrong for having the perception that engineered lightweight wood materials are cheap? Or is it the industry's fault for allowing this perception to exist?

There is one other party that should be involved in this conversation and that is the insurance industry since they are making the payouts on policies to then reconstruct these buildings. Fortunately, no lives were lost in the AvalonBay fire so we do then believe that the building code was sufficient? Any Architect that has been involved in repairing/reconstructing a building after a fire that it is a liability nightmare and that the easiest approach is to rebuild the structure. This should not be a problem since the insurance policy covers for "replacement value". Well, anyone who has worked on a fire job also knows that the term "replacement value" is extremely vague and does not guarantee that this value will in fact pay for the replacement. Another question we can all think about is, how sustainable or resilient are the current practices that are used in constructing single and multi-family buildings if they just burn to the ground? Well we all know the answer to this is money and for the public to afford a home, whether it be for sale or rent, it can only cost so much to construct.

Recently legislation was proposed by Republican Assembleman Scott T. Rumana, bill A4195 (http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2014/Bills/A4500/A4195_I1.HTM), and if approved it would impose a two year moratorium on the use of lightweight construction materials in multi-family buildings. If you have not read this bill I urge you to do so because it not only includes engineered wood, but also traditional nominal wood and steel bar joists. As a result of this legislation AIANJ has formed a Taskforce on Lightweight Construction in order to work with the Assembleman and the Department of Community Affairs and to propose modifications to the bill in order to reduce the impact of the moratorium on the economy. If approved, this bill would be devastating to the construction industry and would affect not only job creation, the housing market, but also architectural firms. The Taskforce is working hand in hand with the Legislative and Governmental Affairs Committee as well as the Codes and Standards Committee and has already requested a meeting with the Assembleman. Many AIANJ members including myself have met the Assembleman at multiple NJAPAC (NJ Architects Political Action Committee) events, so the Assembleman is aware of AIANJ and the important role that the organization plays in the built environment here in N.J. Thus far, my learning lesson which seems to be a recurring theme for Architects is the public's perception, not only about what we do and the role we play, but now it also includes the materials used in buildings. We all need to continue to educate the public about the role of the Architect and the responsibility that we have to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. We can leave it up to the building industry to discuss building materials, but I believe we can also do a much better job of explaining that subject as well.

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Governor Christie has signed legislation to adopt the 2015 ICC series of codes, with amendments, as recommended by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Newly adopted codes are the 2015 New Jersey editions of the IBC, IRC, IMC, IFGC, and IECC as well as the 2014 edition of the National Electrical Code.

It is anticipated that adoption of new codes will occur in June or July 2015, with a six-month grace period to follow, during which the design professional can choose to use either code.

The code update contains a major change in the formatting of the accessibility requirements for construction in New Jersey. Chapter 11, Accessibility, of the 2015 IBC, is to be adopted with amendments to ensure that New Jersey law is met, replacing references to ICC/ANSI A117.1 – 2003 in Section 7 of the Uniform Construction Code and aligning the code more closely to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, in 2010, the ADA was amended and now requires that 60% of the building entrances be accessible. That change is included in Chapter 11 of the 2015 IBC. The ADA was also amended in 2010 to require that one in every six accessible parking spaces be van accessible, with wider access aisles. That change is also included in Chapter 11.

The ICC is submitting Chapter 11 to the United States Department of Justice (US DOJ) for an equivalency review. It should be noted that the Department submitted the Barrier Free Subcode for such a review in 1996 and has kept the US DOJ informed of each subsequent regulatory update. Despite maintaining regular contact with the US DOJ, the Federal review is not yet completed. A determination of equivalency is of importance to the design professionals and commercial building owners in New Jersey because, once a determination of equivalency is made, projects that comply with New Jersey’s accessibility standards will be presumed to comply with the ADA.

AIA-NJ is currently in the process of developing seminars regarding the code updates. Be on the lookout for dates and times.

AIA-NJ MEMBERS – your attendance at this Show and face-time with our exhibitors is what keeps them coming back. And you get information useful to your profession and CEU’s, as well as a drink and dinner! This annual Show has become one of our main income events for the year and subsidizes our other events – membership dinner meetings / special tours. It is very important that you make the effort to be there and work the floor. It is important that employers allow staff to get away on that day for a seminar or two and attend the late afternoon show!

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Leagueline 1Q Update
Joan deRis Allen

Last quarter, Leagueline featured a brief look at the 87-year history of the ALNNJ, including the story of our first scholarship recipient, Joan deRis Allen, in 1955. We are pleased to announce Mrs. Allen will be receiving the 2015 Camphill Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition for her years of dedication, service and outstanding support of the Camphill Mission. As Camphill notes, “A hallmark of Joan’s life is her pioneering spirit… a one-woman architect among many men. Joan could easily commiserate and plan while at the same time enthusing fine work and good social camaraderie — she has inspired and helped wherever she lived and worked.” In 1969 she formed Camphill Architects, has designed several Camphill facilities, and has co-authored several books with her husband, Paul Allen.

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ALNNJ Annual Installation Dinner
Englewood Field Club
January 10, 2015

The Architects League Annual Installation Dinner was held at the Englewood Field Club on Saturday, January 10th. We celebrated the term of 2014 President Ruth A. Bussacco, AIA, and the swearing in of Paul S. Bryan, AIA, as our 2015 President. Trustees Awards were given to Matthew A. Fink, Assoc. AIA, William J. Martin, AIA, and Ralph Rosenberg, AIA, for their contributions to the organization. Our highest accolade, the Vegliante Memorial Award, was given to Ben P. Lee, AIA, for his years of service to the League. Kudos to Installation Chair R. Terry Durden, AIA, for creating an entertaining and festive atmosphere.

Here’s to another wonderful year for the League.

Design Presentation on the 9/11 Memorial Museum
Carl F. Krebs, FAIA
Maggiano’s Little Italy
Shops at Riverside
February 19, 2015

On February 19, ALNNJ was pleased to have Carl F. Krebs, FAIA, partner with Davis Brody Bond Architects and Planners give a presentation on the 9/11 Museum in Lower Manhattan. Krebs described the intricacies involved in integrating the remaining site elements and slurry wall from the original Twin Towers, and developing an experience around a descending ribbon path, that respectfully memorializes the events that occurred in 2001. Krebs was instrumental in coordinating the efforts of public agencies, community groups, historic preservationists, 9/11 survivors and their families.

Real Estate & Economic Trends in NJ
Maggiano’s Little Italy
March 19, 2015

On March 19, the League returned to Maggiano’s in Hackensack for a insightful presentation on upcoming real estate and economic trends in NJ. The event was a joint meeting with the Urban Land Institute, and was presented by Jeff Otteau of the Otteau Valuation Group, which provides valuation and advisory services to financial and governmental institutions, developers and investors.

AIA-NJ Officers for 2015

Capping an eventful year for the architectural profession in New Jersey, AIA-NJ gathered with friends and family on Friday night to celebrate the year’s architectural successes. At AIA-NJ’s annual awards gala, held January 9, 2015, at the Moorestown Community House, the organization installed its slate of officers for 2015, providing a glimpse into who will be steering the organizational ship in the coming year. The 2015 officers include: Kimberly Bunn, AIA, President; Justin A. Mihalik, AIA, President-Elect; Ben Lee, AIA, First Vice President; Verity Frizzell, AIA, Second vice president; Steven Lazarus, AIA, Treasurer; Judy Donnelly, AIA, Secretary; Kurt M Kalafsky, AIA, Immediate Past President. Robert Cozzarelli, AIA, will continue as the organization’s Regional Director, and Nicholas Caravella, Associate AIA, will assume the post of Regional Associate Director.
**New Members**

ALNNJ is pleased to welcome the following:

**New Members**
- Jasmine Alcide, Assoc. AIA
- Darrell Alvarez, AIA
- Nicholas Garand, Assoc. AIA
- Karla Oliver, Assoc. AIA
- John Harby, Assoc. AIA
- Belen Nava, Assoc. AIA
- Michael Sor, AIA
- Timothy Welsh, AIA

**Transfers from Other Sections:**
- Vatche K. Aslanian, AIA
- Howard Dobelle, AIA
- Sang Dae Lee, AIA
- Suzanne Sowinski, AIA

**Allied Members:**
- Joseph D’Hondt, Structural Workshop LLC

**The Architects League looks forward to your involvement and participation. Please make a note of introducing yourself at the next dinner meeting or event.**

**Architects League of Northern New Jersey**

**16th Annual Golf Outing**
**Monday, July 13, 2015**
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