

24 July 2006

Joyce Frank Menschel, President  
Art Commission of the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

re: Street Furniture Contract

Dear President Menschel and Members of the Art Commission:

On behalf of the AIA New York Chapter and its over 4,200 architect and affiliate members here in New York, it is my pleasure to speak in favor of the news stand project as it has been developed by the City of New York and Cemusa that will, at long last, bring well-designed and copious streetscape amenities to the sidewalks of New York.

Having had the opportunity to see the Cemusa prototypes, I can say that the AIA's credo of "Design Matters" has been amply manifested in the elegant and functional street furniture by Grimshaw Architects. Their designs are contemporary but not themed to a specifically referential aesthetic, allowing these long-overdue urban necessities to remain fresh and contextually relevant for many years to come. Design features that are common to the three prototypes, especially the use of tempered glass and of stainless steel framing elements, bring a coordinated approach to what has been a visually blaring cacophony of randomly configured newsstands and bus shelters in the diverse neighborhoods of our five boroughs.

New York is a preeminent design center in fashion, in publishing, in the graphic and theatrical arts, and, arguably, for architecture and urban design. The streetscape contract, if fully implemented, will bring to the streets of New York the same well-deserved attention to design detail and functional benefit that have been encouraged by DOT and other City agencies in street lighting, waterfront enhancement and the creation of public and private open space. Functionality is as important as aesthetics, and the design prototypes show an equivalent level of concern and sophisticated resolution. Lighting, material use and solidity in these street furniture prototypes speak to a grounded awareness of the special needs of New York's grit and grime, while putting an optimistic and progressive face on streets that will become less mean by their presence.

The overarching issue for the AIA New York Chapter in being here today to speak in favor of the newsstand project is the need for street furniture that is of the highest design quality located throughout the City. We consequently urge ratification.

Yours truly,

Fredric Bell, FAIA  
Executive Director