

March 30, 2009

Alexander MacLeod
Chairman, Building Board of Regulations and Standards
One Ashburton Place
13th Floor, Room 1301
Boston MA 02108

Dear Chairman MacLeod:

The Boston Society of Architects and Massachusetts AIA strongly endorse the “stretch code” under consideration by the Board of Building Regulations and Standards. Increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings is the right goal. And the building code is the right tool to achieve this goal.

More than 60 percent of all the electrical energy produced in the United States is used to power our buildings—putting how they are designed at the center of the discussion about how to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

Designing new buildings that are 20 percent more energy-efficient than the existing building code—as would be mandated under the stretch code—is easily achievable. Some buildings designed with conventional construction materials and methods have exceeded energy-use thresholds by 30 to 60 percent. The key is to consider all building components as part of an interrelated system. Improving wall and roof insulation allows heating systems to be reduced. Better-performing windows and proper solar orientation reduces the need for interior lighting and, subsequently, reduces the cooling load. Efficient lighting systems with daylight and movement sensors dramatically reduce a building’s electrical load.

The claim that the stretch code will be used by towns to restrict development is unfounded. This amendment will allow cities and towns whose citizens are most concerned about buildings’ energy use to respond without creating new zoning ordinances or lobbying their state legislators for specialized construction-related laws that often conflict with the building code.

Furthermore, when the stretch code is adopted, the Boston Society of Architects and the Massachusetts AIA will commit to both training our members to meet these standards and encouraging every city and town in the commonwealth to adopt the stretch code. These efforts will help “mainstream” energy-efficient design thinking, promote consistency in statewide approvals processes and, perhaps most important, support the state and federal government’s goals of creating a green economy.

The building industry should be the backbone of that critical economic endeavor, and the architecture community stands ready to take up the challenge.

Best regards,



Jim Bachelor FAIA
BSA President



Margaret Minor Wood AIA
AIA MA President