

Introduction

Agency Mission

The Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) is an integral part of the City's system for regulating land use, development, and construction and was established as an independent board to grant "relief" from the zoning code. When the City's first zoning regulations were enacted in 1916, they were intended to be generally applicable to large swaths of the City. However, the drafters had raised concerns that individual parcels of land might be unduly restricted by the regulations, subjecting the City to claims that the City had unconstitutionally taken private property. Historically, appeals boards have been created all over the country whenever municipalities establish land-use regulations. By providing an avenue for relief through the Board, the City significantly reduces the likelihood that any broad constitutional challenges to its overall zoning system could be successful, and the Board safeguards the City's ability to regulate the use and development of private property.

The Board is empowered by the City Charter to interpret the meaning and applicability of the Zoning Resolution, the New York City Construction Codes, and the Multiple Dwelling Law. This power includes the ability to vary in certain instances the provisions of these regulations.

Most of the Board's activity involves reviewing and deciding applications for variances and special permits, as authorized by the Zoning Resolution, and appeals by property owners whose proposals have been denied by the Department of Buildings, Fire Department, or Department of Small Business Services. The Board also reviews and decides applications from the Department of Buildings and Fire Department to modify or revoke certificates of occupancy.

The Board can only act upon specific applications brought by landowners or interested parties who have received prior determinations from one of the enforcement agencies noted above. The Board cannot offer opinions or interpretations generally, and it cannot grant a variance or a special permit

to any property owner who has not first sought a proper permit or approval from an enforcement agency. Further, in reaching its determinations, the Board is limited to the specific findings and remedies set forth in state and local laws, codes, and the Zoning Resolution, including, where required by law, an assessment of potential environmental impacts.

Background

Local Law 12 of 2023 requires every New York City agency to develop and implement a five- year accessibility plan, in consultation with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities ("MOPD"). The legislation mandates that the accessibility plans outline the steps agencies are taking to "ensure that the agency's workplace, services, programs and activities are accessible to and accommodating and inclusive of persons with disabilities" by improving physical, digital, and programmatic access, and providing effective communications for persons with disabilities. These efforts include, but are not limited to: any alterations or structural changes to facilities or premises that are owned and operated by the agency or contracted for use by the agency or otherwise under the agency's jurisdiction; any planned upgrades or investments in technology or tools that will improve accessibility within the agency or access to such agency's services and programs; and additional steps to make the agency's programs and services more accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Statement of Commitment

The New York City Board of Standards and Appeals ("BSA" or the "Board") believes in an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment. BSA is committed to providing persons with disabilities with access to the Board's services; to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to accessibility; and to meeting accessibility requirements in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

Consistent with the purpose of the legislation, BSA strives to use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

Receipt of complaints, investigations and other BSA services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities to enable them to obtain, use or benefit from BSA resources and/or services;

- Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from BSA resources and/or services
- When communicating with a person with a disability, the BSA will do so in a manner that considers the person's disability and preferred method of communication.
- Planned installation of assistive listening devices so that persons with disabilities may use assistive devices to support access to BSA resources and services; and
- Persons with disabilities and their service animals are accommodated in all aspects of service provision unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

The Board can only act upon specific applications

Disability Service Facilitator and Other Key Accessibility Information Employees and/or members of the public who need assistance accessing a particular program or service, should contact BSA's DSF Toni Matias at (212) 386-0009 or frontdesk@bsa.nyc.gov.

Availability

BSA's accessibility plan is publicly posted at: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/bsa/about/accessibility-statement.page>

Individuals may request a copy of this document in an accessible alternative format by contacting the DSF at tmatias@bsa.nyc.gov or (212) 386-0085.

Feedback Process

We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of our digital content. Please let us know if you encounter accessibility issues by using the [Website Accessibility Feedback Form](#). If you need assistance accessing a particular program or service, please reach out to the Board of Standards and Appeals Disability Services Facilitator at (212) 386-0009 or BSA FrontDesk.

Progress Report

Physical Access

The BSA has opened up the space in the front desk area to increase mobility. The BSA offices are accessible. The BSA remains committed to work with DCAS to install assistive listening systems in Spector Hall at 22 Reade Street.

Digital Access

BSA computers and website are hosted by OTI. BSA continues to strive to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 Level AA for both our internal and public facing websites.

In 2025, BSA staff took on the task of updating BSA applications and instructions along with redesigning the BSA website to make it more user friendly and accessible.

Programmatic Access

BSA has taken steps to ensure that current and new employees have and will receive Disability Etiquette and Awareness Training.

BSA continues to explore methods of enhancing programmatic access to agency services including, but not limited, to live transcription accessibility improvements and ASL interpretation.

Effective Communications

BSA remains committed to providing accessible service to persons with disabilities and making our application process, informational guides, rules and regulations and other communications accessible to persons with disabilities. During the past year BSA received no requests for alternative format but remains ready and able to respond to such requests.

Workplace Inclusion

BSA remains committed to fostering an affirmative and equitable employment program. We continue to follow the policies outlined in the 5-Year Plan, including all accessibility policies; accommodations in recruitment, hiring and on-boarding; documentation for requests for accommodation; and requiring and providing access to relevant training.

Consultations and Feedback

The agency holds all-staff meetings on a regular basis, where employees will discuss work related issues.

Conclusion

The Board of Standards and Appeals believes in an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment. The BSA is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to the Commission's services; to identifying, preventing and removing barriers to accessibility; and to meeting accessibility requirements in a matter that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.