

**Testimony of Andrew S. Hollweck
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New York City Council Committee on Land Use
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Good afternoon, Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Andrew Hollweck, Vice President at the New York Building Congress, a membership organization drawn from the City's design, construction and real estate industry.

The Building Congress supports Intro 775, because it creates a clearly defined timeline for identifying and designating landmarks in New York City.

For fifty years, the landmarking process has ensured the City's culturally significant buildings are protected and will help define the City's character for generations to come. At the same time, the process used to designate landmarks is deeply flawed.

Without firm time limits, the landmarks review process leaves thousands of properties in legal limbo, encumbering them with a semi-permanent designation that prevents their improvement.

For example, according to the Real Estate Board, in 2014, the LPC had a backlog of over 3,400 calendared properties before it undertook a major initiative to reduce this backlog, cutting it in half. Several properties have been on the LPC calendar for years without resolution. While the de Blasio Administration's efforts to address this are admirable, this could easily be undone by a future administration with different priorities.

Once a building is simply placed on the LPC calendar, it also increases the administrative hurdles to making even modest changes and improvements to the structure. Improvements must be reviewed and approved by both the LPC *and* the Department of Buildings, adding cost and delaying necessary upgrades.

The Building Congress also supports Intro 837 for similar reasons: by creating a searchable public database, the bill will offer transparency to a process that has historically lacked a formal, publicly-available list of properties under LPC's purview and their status.

With this said, we hope this is the beginning and not the end of a process to carefully review and improve upon the City's historic preservation laws. We can still protect the City's important historic structures and neighborhoods, but we should do so in a way that gives building owners more certainty, encourages development and ensures the City's ongoing economic vitality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.