

Shin-pei Tsay

Good morning, Chair Lander, members of the Rules, Privileges and Elections Committee of this New York City Council. It's a pleasure and an honor to stand before you today as a nominee to be considered for the Public Design Commission.

I am deeply honored to testify, it is humbling for me -- an immigrant -- to have this opportunity to serve the greatest city in the world, New York.

I moved to New York City after finishing graduate school 15 years ago and fell in love with it immediately. As an urban planner, I now have had the opportunity to travel to cities across the globe, but it was in New York many years ago that I really experienced firsthand how the design of public spaces can make life all the better. Indeed, it's a unique city that can provide so many places where so many different kinds of people can peacefully co-exist, and New York has some of the best public spaces I have ever seen.

I discovered that good design in the built environment and especially in public spaces is not only beautiful and aesthetically pleasing, it also allows all people -- young and old, rich and poor, newcomers and long-time residents -- to share space in a way that many other cities around the world can only dream of. This revelation was transformational for me, having grown up without such amenities.

My personal interest in creating spaces that are welcoming for all led me to build a career in the field of urban planning and design. Specifically, I wanted to infuse the public's interest in the design process, so that the spaces we share are designed to serve the broad public into the future, not singular special interests. I built up a base of knowledge around what makes a place appealing to people, by the way it looks, how it functions, and how we all benefit.

I gravitated towards a focus on transportation, a natural inclination because so much of public life is carried out on the street. Streets make up as much as 80 percent of urban public spaces in cities. For me, a standard to judge a city's public realm is the way people get from place to place, and the experience of doing so has come to embody the level of freedom and quality of life that a vibrant city has to offer.

I've been lucky to regularly interact with design and the design community, as I imagined I wanted to so many years ago. Much of my professional experience, regardless of organization or title, involves understanding how people use public spaces and translating that understanding into design solutions. I have redesigned many streets and streetscapes, considered public squares, assessed public markets, reviewed designs of public buildings, and provided feedback on proposals for public parks for people as varied as community members to mayors. My work involves matching the critical aesthetics of a project to other vital economic, social, environmental considerations, in

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