



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0547-2023, **Version:** *

Res. No. 547

Resolution calling upon the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) and the New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) to reconsider their decision to substitute precast concrete wall panels in place of traditional handset brick and block walls in public projects in New York City.

By Council Members De La Rosa, Ung, Krishnan, Gennaro, Farías, Won, Brewer, Powers, Narcisse, Ossé, Bottcher, Abreu, Holden, Schulman, Marte, Moya, Hudson, Brannan, Ayala, Riley, Hanks, Menin, Hanif, Dinowitz, Avilés, Rivera, Nurse and Louis

Whereas, The New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) is the central authority governing the construction and renovation of schools in New York City; and

Whereas, New York City's Department of Design and Construction (DDC), meanwhile, acts as the principal project manager on the City's capital construction projects; and

Whereas, As such, design guidelines and building preferences adopted by both the SCA and DDC have a marked impact on the construction industry, particularly in New York State (NYS); and

Whereas, Over the past few years, the SCA has issued design guidelines that prefer using precast concrete wall panels (PCPs) instead of traditional handset brick and block, in its construction process; and

Whereas, Similarly, DDC has several major projects currently in process where PCPs are being utilized; and

Whereas, The preference for using PCPs over handset brick and block has a number of negative economic, environmental and equity impacts on New York City (NYC); and

Whereas, In 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul signed the Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act (LECCLA) which calls for low-embodied carbon concrete to be used in NYS public projects and for agencies

and boards appointed pursuant to NYS Law to develop guidelines for procuring low-embodied carbon concrete; and

Whereas, In 2022, Mayor Eric Adams issued two Executive Orders (EOs) #22 and #23, wherein the former directs all NYC agencies to tailor opportunities to support employment of city residents and to support diversity in hiring and the latter directs all NYC agencies to incorporate low-carbon solutions in order to reduce CO2 emissions in construction; and

Whereas, The City Council fully supports the policies of the LECCLA, EO#22 and EO#23 and asks both the SCA and the DDC to adhere to all three; and

Whereas, A 2022 study on the economic impacts of handset brick and block walls versus PCPs used in the construction of NYC schools concluded that, for every \$1 million expenditure on handset brick and block walls, an additional \$1.25 million is generated in the local NYC economy over and above a \$1 million expenditure on PCPs; and

Whereas, Furthermore, this same report from Pinnacle Economics found that using handset brick and block instead of PCPs increased working hours for most local trades workers and manufacturing workers and that 68 percent of those hours benefited minority workers in NYC; and

Whereas, Of the top ten PCP manufacturers in the United States, there are none in New York but there are multiple block manufacturers in NYS including one block manufacturer New York City; and

Whereas, An analysis from the 2022 comparative report from Pinnacle Economics shows that “block/brick walls represent 10.9 percent of total project costs and are locally produced in NYC while precast concrete panels represent 74.8 percent of total project costs and are imported”; and

Whereas, According to the Concrete Masonry Association of California and Nevada, using handset brick and block over PCPs benefits the environment by reducing the amount of cement required in the construction of a wall, thus reducing CO2 emissions in construction; and

Whereas, Local manufacturers of concrete masonry blocks use local recycled material in the forms of processed glass collected from the NYC waste stream and the carbon capture system as featured in a March 10, 2023 *New York Times* article, which further reduces the CO2 impact of the locally sourced concrete masonry blocks, the out-of-state PCP manufacturers do not; and

Whereas, Given that all of the largest PCP manufacturers are outside of New York, the decision to use PCPs has a negative environmental impact because the material has to be transported into NYS and, further, has a negative economic impact because PCPs support out-of-state businesses to the detriment of NYS citizens and businesses; and

Whereas, While PCPs may expedite the construction process, the 2021 data collected by RSMeans Data from the Gordian Group shows that, nationally, PCPs cost nearly 36 percent more per square foot for material and installation than handset brick and block walls; and

Whereas, The replacement of handset brick and block laying with PCPs places local manufacturing along with the brick and block-laying trades at risk; and

Whereas, According to data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, NYS had the highest employment level of brickmasons, blockmasons and mason tenders in the country; and

Whereas, As a City with a diverse structural landscape, NYC relies heavily on these trades and manufacturing workers to build, repair, maintain, and fabricate construction materials for its new and historical building stock; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the SCA and the DDC to reconsider their decisions to substitute PCPs in place of traditional, handset brick and block walls in public projects in NYC.

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