

# STATE OF NEW YORK

3397

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 27, 2025

Introduced by Sens. GOUNARDES, BAILEY, CLEARE, COMRIE, COONEY, HARCKHAM, HINCHEY, HOYLMAN-SIGAL, JACKSON, KAVANAGH, MAY, MAYER, MYRIE, PARKER, RAMOS, RIVERA, S. RYAN, SALAZAR, SEPULVEDA, STAVISKY, WEBB -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development

AN ACT to amend the general municipal law, in relation to enacting the "faith-based affordable housing act" and residential development on religious land

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as  
2 the "faith-based affordable housing act".

3 § 2. The general municipal law is amended by adding a new section 96-c  
4 to read as follows:

5 § 96-c. Residential development on religious land. 1. For the purposes  
6 of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

7 (a) "Covered site" shall mean any parcel of land, or group of one or  
8 more contiguous parcels of land, that lies within an urban area as  
9 defined by the U.S. Census Bureau but does not lie within a locally  
10 designated manufacturing or industrial zoning district, where such  
11 parcel or group of one or more contiguous parcels of land is owned sole-  
12 ly, directly or indirectly (e.g. via a wholly owned limited liability  
13 company) by a religious corporation as of the effective date of this  
14 section.

15 (b) "Religious corporation" shall have the same meaning as defined in  
16 the religious corporations law and shall also include nonprofit corpo-  
17 rations that include in their purpose worship or the training or  
18 conducting of religious rituals or the reading or study of religious  
19 texts incorporated under the not-for-profit corporation law or foreign  
20 corporations subject to such law.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 (c) "Buildings department" shall mean the city, town, or village  
2 department, division, or other agency or office having primary super-  
3 vision of the construction of buildings and issuance of building  
4 permits.

5 (d) "Commissioner" shall mean the commissioner of the division of  
6 housing and community renewal.

7 (e) "Residential building" shall mean any structure used in part or  
8 entirely for full-time, non-transient residential occupation that  
9 contains at least four residential units; that is connected to community  
10 or public water and sewerage systems, including sewage treatment works,  
11 upon date of initial occupancy; and in which no more than thirty-five  
12 percent of the floor area is devoted to religious or educational use or  
13 charitable or community facility use, provided that any existing reli-  
14 gious, educational, charitable, or community facility floor area shall  
15 not be counted toward such thirty-five percent in the case that the  
16 residential building is an addition or an enlargement of an existing  
17 building.

18 (f) "Affordable unit" shall mean a housing unit affordable to a  
19 specific percentage of the applicable area median income, as defined  
20 annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Such  
21 units may either be homeownership or rental units.

22 (g) "Affordability percentage" shall mean the percentage of a residen-  
23 tial building's gross floor area required to be set aside as affordable  
24 housing.

25 (h) "Affordable floor area" shall mean the amount of a residential  
26 building's floor area to be set aside for affordable units.

27 (i) "Construction" and variations thereof shall mean the construction  
28 of new residential buildings as well as the addition to or alteration of  
29 existing buildings.

30 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of any local law, ordinance, resol-  
31 ution or regulation, each village, town, and city shall allow the  
32 construction and occupation of residential buildings on any covered site  
33 up to the specified densities provided in this subdivision. Each  
34 village, town, and city shall allow such construction and occupation on  
35 an as-of-right, ministerial basis, without site plan review. Addi-  
36 tionally, this section shall not reduce or disallow development rights  
37 or options provided under local zoning laws.

38 (a) On any covered site located within a village, town, or city with  
39 fewer than fifty thousand inhabitants, residential buildings shall be  
40 allowed up to a height of thirty-five feet or the height of the tallest  
41 existing building on the covered site, whichever is taller, and up to a  
42 density of thirty residential units per acre or such proportion thereof.

43 (b) On any covered site located within a village, town or city with  
44 fifty thousand or more inhabitants but fewer than one million inhabit-  
45 ants, residential buildings shall be allowed up to a height of fifty-  
46 five feet or the height of the tallest existing building on the covered  
47 site, whichever is taller, and up to a density of fifty residential  
48 units per acre, provided, however, that if the covered site is located  
49 in a city with fifty thousand or more inhabitants but fewer than one  
50 million inhabitants and within eight hundred feet of a zoning district  
51 that permits a height or density for residential use greater than what  
52 is otherwise provided for in this paragraph, then such city shall allow  
53 residential buildings on the covered site up to the maximum height and  
54 density permitted in such zoning district, or allow such residential  
55 buildings to utilize any other optional rules or regulations regulating  
56 residential bulk and height in such zoning district, provided, however

1 the residential building shall not have to comply with any other regu-  
2 lations provided for in such zoning district other than bulk and height  
3 regulations.

4 (c) On any covered site located within a city with one million or more  
5 inhabitants, residential buildings shall be allowed up to a height of  
6 fifty-five feet or the height of the tallest existing building on the  
7 covered site, whichever is taller, and a density of a floor area ratio  
8 of 2.2 square feet, as defined by such city's zoning ordinances,  
9 provided, however, that if the covered site is located within eight  
10 hundred feet of a zoning district that permits a height or density for  
11 residential use greater than what is otherwise provided for in this  
12 paragraph, then the city shall allow residential buildings on the  
13 covered site up to the maximum height and density permitted in such  
14 zoning district, or allow such residential buildings to utilize any  
15 other optional rules or regulations regulating residential bulk and  
16 height in such zoning district, provided, however the residential build-  
17 ing shall not have to comply with any other regulations provided for in  
18 such zoning district other than bulk and height regulations.

19 3. If a religious corporation disposes of land via sale or lease for  
20 development of a residential building pursuant to this section, an offi-  
21 cer or key person, as defined in section one hundred two of the not-for-  
22 profit corporation law, of such religious corporation who will be  
23 involved in such sale or lease on behalf of the religious corporation  
24 must have attended and received a certificate of completion of a train-  
25 ing course on real estate development and affordable housing. Such  
26 training course must include content regarding the development process,  
27 timeline and funding sources for affordable and mixed-income housing,  
28 the types and selection of vendors and consultants related to such  
29 development, a review of the statutory requirements for such sale or  
30 lease by a religious corporation and other information relevant to hous-  
31 ing development as determined by the commissioner. Pursuant to the proc-  
32 ess required by section twelve of the religious corporations law and/or  
33 section five hundred ten of the not-for-profit corporation law, as  
34 applicable, the religious corporation shall submit to the court or to  
35 the attorney general a copy of such certificate of completion for such  
36 training as a condition of a sale or lease of land for housing develop-  
37 ment pursuant to this section. Such training may be conducted by any  
38 governmental entity, religious corporation, or nonprofit, or any number  
39 or combination of the foregoing, approved by the commissioner.

40 4. For buildings constructed pursuant to this section, a village,  
41 town, or city may regulate the following, provided the regulation is  
42 reasonable and applied equally to all residential developments and shall  
43 not impede the full development of the floor area and height provided in  
44 subdivision two of this section:

45 (a) the construction of sidewalks up to five feet in width and up to  
46 five feet of street lawn or road verge along the parcel's street fron-  
47 tage, including up to one street tree per twenty-five feet of frontage,  
48 with standards to conform to the standard specifications for  
49 construction and materials promulgated by the department of transporta-  
50 tion;

51 (b) up to twenty feet of rear yard and up to ten feet of side yards at  
52 the boundaries of the covered site; and

53 (c) appropriate placement of curb cuts for accessory parking or load-  
54 ing that ensure public safety while also allowing reasonable access to  
55 the parcel and the residential building.

1 5. For residential buildings constructed pursuant to this section, a  
2 village, town, or city shall not require any development standards or  
3 conditions of approval, other than state law, building, and fire codes,  
4 or in the case of a city with one million or more inhabitants, local  
5 fire and building codes. No village, town, or city shall require the  
6 following and any such requirements shall be void:

7 (a) the provision of accessory off-street parking;

8 (b) minimum, maximum, or average unit sizes;

9 (c) the regulation of the number of allowable housing units based on  
10 lot size or any other criteria, other than the densities prescribed in  
11 subdivision two of this section;

12 (d) the prioritization of housing units to residents of certain neigh-  
13 borhoods or jurisdictions;

14 (e) the prioritization of housing units for any age group;

15 (f) the imposition of any mandatory affordability requirements or  
16 minimum income or asset standards other than what is otherwise provided  
17 for in subdivision seven of this section;

18 (g) minimum purchase price for any homeownership units;

19 (h) the adherence to any local building or fire code beyond the stand-  
20 ards specified by the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Build-  
21 ing Code Act, except in a city with one million or more inhabitants; and

22 (i) any other requirement that is determined by a court, pursuant to  
23 proceedings brought under subdivision nine of this section, to impede  
24 the full development of permissible residential buildings on a covered  
25 site.

26 6. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any local law, ordinance,  
27 resolution or regulation, the building department shall ministerially  
28 and without discretionary review or a hearing process an application for  
29 a building permit within sixty days of receipt of an application pursu-  
30 ant to this section.

31 (b) A village, town, or city shall not impose any substantial burden  
32 on buildings constructed pursuant to this section, as compared with new  
33 single-family residential buildings, including the provision of municip-  
34 al services and utility access.

35 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict the use or  
36 size of buildings permitted at a greater height and/or bulk than that  
37 allowed by this section under local law, regulation, or resolution.

38 (d) The approval by the building department shall only take into  
39 consideration conformance with this section and applicable state laws  
40 and state building, fire, and energy codes. No other local law, policy,  
41 regulation, or resolution shall be the basis for the denial of a permit,  
42 except in a city of one million or more inhabitants, where adherence to  
43 local building and fire codes may be required.

44 (e) No payment greater than one quarter dollar per square foot of  
45 floor area shall be required in total for building and other permits  
46 issued for residential developments constructed pursuant to this  
47 section. A town, village, or city shall not charge impact fees, recre-  
48 ation fees, or any other fees beyond the amount provided in this para-  
49 graph.

50 (f) (i) Notwithstanding article eight of the environmental conserva-  
51 tion law and its implementing regulations, no environmental impact  
52 statement for a residential building shall be required if it conforms to  
53 the provisions of this section, provided the following studies and  
54 certifications are completed and submitted to the building department  
55 and any state or local agencies as designated by the commissioner: a  
56 Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) pursuant to the federal

1 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (42  
2 U.S.C. Chapter 103); soil and water testing consistent with standards  
3 promulgated by the commissioner of environmental conservation; and a  
4 certification from a qualified environmental professional, where such  
5 term shall be defined by the commissioner of environmental conservation  
6 pursuant to regulation, that such action, as proposed, will not violate  
7 any state wetland laws or drinking water laws under article eleven of  
8 the public health law, or any rules or regulations promulgated thereto.

9 (ii) Provided further that environmental impact statements completed  
10 pursuant to article eight of the environmental conservation law for  
11 proposed actions other than the construction and occupation of residen-  
12 tial buildings made possible by this section, which are completed on or  
13 after the effective date of this section, shall not be required to  
14 consider the as-of-right construction and occupation of residential  
15 buildings made possible by this section on such other actions.

16 (g) For the purposes of fees and building permits, for buildings  
17 constructed pursuant to this section, a village, town, or city shall not  
18 discriminate between rental units and condominium or cooperative units.  
19 No permit or additional fee shall be required as a condition for use as  
20 a rental apartment building.

21 7. (a) All residential buildings constructed pursuant to this section  
22 in a town, village, or city with fewer than one million inhabitants  
23 shall set aside at least twenty percent of the residential floor area  
24 for households earning an average of eighty percent of the area median  
25 income. In a city with one million or more inhabitants, a residential  
26 building shall provide affordable housing by complying with one of the  
27 following options:

28 (i) the residential building shall set aside at least twenty-five  
29 percent of its residential floor area for households earning an average  
30 of sixty percent of the area median income provided that a minimum of  
31 five percent of units are affordable to households at forty percent of  
32 the area median income;

33 (ii) the residential building shall set aside at least thirty percent  
34 of its residential floor area for households earning an average of  
35 eighty percent of the area median income; or

36 (iii) the residential building shall set aside at least twenty percent  
37 of its residential floor area for households earning an average of forty  
38 percent of the area median income.

39 (b) The amount of affordable floor area shall be calculated by multi-  
40 plying gross residential floor area by the percentage of the floor area  
41 that must be affordable pursuant to this paragraph. The resulting floor  
42 area must be devoted to affordable housing, less the applicable propor-  
43 tion of the building devoted to residential circulation and common  
44 space, not to exceed twenty-five percent of the affordable floor area.  
45 The number of required affordable units shall be the affordability  
46 percentage multiplied by the total number of residential units in the  
47 development, with the product rounded to the nearest whole number. To  
48 achieve the affordability levels specified in this paragraph, buildings  
49 may contain units affordable to a variety of incomes, provided that on  
50 average the affordability levels meet the requirements of this paragraph  
51 and no affordable unit shall be rented to any household with an income  
52 greater than one hundred percent of the area median income. Nothing in  
53 this subdivision shall be construed to prohibit the inclusion of addi-  
54 tional affordable floor area in a residential building on a covered  
55 site, at the discretion of the owner of such building.

1 (c) A property containing any affordable units must be restricted  
2 using a mechanism such as a declaration of restrictive covenants or a  
3 regulatory agreement with a local or state agency that shall ensure that  
4 the affordable units shall remain subject to affordable regulations for  
5 the life of the building. Such covenants shall require that the unit be  
6 the primary residence of the household selected to occupy the unit. Upon  
7 approval, such declaration or regulatory agreement shall be recorded  
8 against the property containing the affordable unit prior to the issu-  
9 ance of a certificate of occupancy for the development.

10 (d) The affordable units shall be physically integrated into the  
11 design of the development and shall be distributed among various sizes  
12 (efficiency, one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom units) in the same  
13 proportion as all other units in the development. The minimum gross  
14 floor area per affordable unit shall not be less than ninety percent of  
15 the average floor area of non-restricted housing units of equivalent  
16 size (efficiency, one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom units) in the  
17 development. Affordable units shall be distributed evenly among floors.

18 (e) The affordable units shall not be distinguishable from other units  
19 from the outside or building exteriors. Interior finishes and  
20 furnishings shall be indistinguishable from the other units in the  
21 building. Affordable units shall not have a separate entrance or  
22 differing access to common amenities. Buildings constructed pursuant to  
23 this section may not charge residents of affordable units additional  
24 fees for access to common amenities, if such charges would mean that  
25 total housing costs for such units would exceed thirty percent of the  
26 specified percentage of the area median income.

27 (f) For affordable homeownership units, the title to said property  
28 shall be restricted so that in the event of any resale by the home buyer  
29 or any successor, the resale price shall not exceed an amount affordable  
30 to a household at the specified percentage of the area median income.

31 8. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to override the New  
32 York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code Act, the Freshwater  
33 Wetlands Act, the public health law, or any regulations, restrictions,  
34 limitations, or conditions, existing as of the effective date of this  
35 section, which have been placed upon a site, building, or structure  
36 designated as a landmark or containing an interior landmark or in a  
37 historic district under any local law, regulation, resolution, or ordi-  
38 nance governing the demolition, construction, reconstruction, alter-  
39 ation, and/or other work on or near such site, building, or structure.

40 9. (a) Upon a failure of a local government to timely act upon an  
41 application to construct or occupy residences in accordance with this  
42 section, or denial of such application in violation of this section, any  
43 party aggrieved by any such failure or denial may commence a special  
44 proceeding against the subject local government and the officer pursuant  
45 to article seventy-eight of the civil practice law and rules, in the  
46 supreme court within the judicial district in which the local government  
47 or the greater portion of the territory is located, to compel compliance  
48 with the provisions of this section.

49 (b) If, upon commencement of such proceeding, it shall appear to the  
50 court that testimony is necessary for the proper disposition of the  
51 matter, the court may take evidence and determine the matter. Alterna-  
52 tively, the court may appoint a hearing officer pursuant to article  
53 forty-three of the civil practice law and rules to take such evidence as  
54 it may direct and report the same to the court with the hearing offi-  
55 cer's findings of fact and conclusions of law, which shall constitute a  
56 part of the proceedings upon which the determination of the court shall

1 be made. The court may reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modi-  
2 fy any decision brought to the court for review.

3 (c) Attorneys' fees and costs shall be allowed against the local  
4 government whose failure or refusal gave rise to the special proceeding  
5 in cases in which the denial of building permits is overturned by the  
6 court.

7 10. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision five of this  
8 section, a city, state, or federal housing agency may regulate the  
9 design, construction, occupancy, marketing, and leasing of affordable  
10 housing developed pursuant to this section when such agency is subsidiz-  
11 ing the operations, development, or preservation of the housing and  
12 entering into a regulatory agreement with the owner thereof.

13 11. The division of housing and community renewal, the attorney gener-  
14 al, and the department of environmental conservation shall have the  
15 authority to promulgate any rules and regulations necessary to implement  
16 the provisions of this section. No later than one year from the effec-  
17 tive date of this section, the division of housing and community renewal  
18 shall promulgate rules and regulations including but not limited to the  
19 following:

20 (a) the percentage of a household's income that may be devoted to  
21 housing costs when initially occupying an affordable unit and which  
22 expenses shall be included in the calculation of housing costs;

23 (b) occupancy standards for affordable units;

24 (c) enforcement mechanisms to ensure permanent affordability of  
25 affordable units developed pursuant to this section;

26 (d) marketing standards for affordable units constructed pursuant to  
27 this section, provided, however, that a city of one million or more  
28 inhabitants may regulate the marketing and leasing of such affordable  
29 units according to the standard marketing guidelines promulgated by such  
30 city's department of housing preservation and development, and provided  
31 further that marketing standards for all units constructed pursuant to  
32 this section must include a requirement that they be leased or sold  
33 without consideration of an applicant's religious beliefs and/or prac-  
34 tices; and

35 (e) the content of training that must be received by the religious  
36 corporation as a condition of the sale or lease of land for the develop-  
37 ment of a residential building pursuant to this section.

38 12. The division of housing and community renewal shall provide tech-  
39 nical assistance to municipal governments to aid in the adherence to the  
40 provisions of this section and with the applicable revisions to local  
41 land use regulations and plans.

42 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately.