



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

232 East 11th Street
New York, New York 10003

(212) 475-9585
fax: (212) 475-9582
www.gvshp.org

Executive Director
Andrew Berman

President of the Board
Arthur Levin

Vice President
Justine Leguizamo

Vice President
Trevor Stewart

Secretary / Treasurer
Allan G. Sperling

Trustees

Mary Ann Arisman
Tom Birchard
Richard Blodgett
Kyung Choi Bordes
Tom Cooper
Elizabeth Ely
Cassie Glover
David Hottenroth
Anita Isola
Leslie Mason
Ruth McCoy
Andrew S. Paul
Robert Rogers
Katherine Schoonover
Marilyn Sobel
Judith Stonehill
Naomi Usher
Linda Yowell
F. Anthony Zunino III

Advisors

Kent Barwick
Joan K. Davidson
Christopher Forbes
Margaret Halsey Gardiner
Elizabeth Gilmore
Carol Greitzer
Tony Hiss
Martin Hutner
James Stewart Polshek
Martica Sawin Fitch
Anne-Marie Sumner
Calvin Trillin
Jean-Claude van Itallie
George Veillonakis
Vicki Weiner
Anthony C. Wood

Testimony to New York City Council regarding East Houston Street Rezoning ULURP Application No. C 160137 ZMM August 9, 2016

Good morning Councilmembers. I am here today to urge you to vote no on the proposed rezoning of East Houston Street, which was approved by the City Planning Commission over the objections of Community Board #3 and the Manhattan Borough President.

There is absolutely no benefit to the public in the proposed rezoning. That is supposed to be the criteria for adopting zoning changes. Helping a single developer who has hired a well-connected lobbying firm that is a strong fundraiser for and supporter of the Mayor, as is the case here, is not supposed to be the criteria for doing so. But it appears to be here.

It is inconceivable that an applicant with such a checkered history would be so readily accommodated by the City Planning Commission as was done in this case. This developer has a long record of accusations of tenant harassment. The city subsidized daycare center which previously occupied the space he is seeking to develop was forced out, at least in part according to the Community Board, by failures on the part of this applicant to ensure the safety and integrity of the building. When this area was rezoned in 2008, the Community Board specifically sought to keep a commercial overlay from these blocks in order to encourage the retention of community facility uses here. And yet the City Planning Commission and the Mayor are only too willing to accommodate a developer whose actions have had such a harmful impact upon low-income tenants, as well as neighborhood residents who need access to affordable childcare.

This is a particular slap in the face given that at the same time, elsewhere in Community Board 3 and in Council District 2, the Mayor and City Planning Commission have adamantly refused to act upon community-requested rezoning plans that are supported by the local community board and Councilmember.

On the west side of Councilmember Mendez's district, along the University Place and Broadway corridors, we have been begging the City Planning Commission for nearly two years to move ahead with a community-driven rezoning that would for the first time require affordable housing in the area, and put in place reasonable height caps for new development. But in spite of the support of Councilmember Mendez, Borough President Brewer, the local community board, and virtually the entire affected community, the Mayor and the City Planning Commission have refused.

And in Chinatown, a community-driven rezoning plan that would similarly preserve and create affordable housing, protect tenants, and keep new development in character with the neighborhood has been consistently rejected by the Mayor and the Commission, in spite of similar local support. And yet this developer's requested rezoning, which will benefit no one but him, receives strong support from the Mayor's City Planning Commission. Something is very, very wrong.

This is not the kind of rezoning this community is looking for or needs. If the Mayor and City Planning Commission wants to facilitate rezonings that will serve the public interest and which the affected communities want, there are several in this same Council District and Community Board to choose from. We urge you not to approve this one.