



May 27, 2021

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232 EAST 11TH STREET

NEW YORK NY 10003

212 475-9585

VILLAGEPRESERVATION.ORG

Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Hon. Margaret Chin, NYC Councilmember, 1st District

Hon. Carlina Rivera, NYC Councilmember, 2nd District

Hon. Corey Johnson, NYC Council Speaker and Member, 3rd District
via e-mail

Re: Certified SoHo/NoHo Plan

Dear Borough President Brewer, Councilmembers Chin and Rivera, and Speaker Johnson:

As the leaders of community organizations representing thousands of residents and businesses who will be deeply affected by the proposed SoHo/NoHo upzoning, we urge you in the strongest of terms to oppose this now-certified plan.

We believe you must oppose this plan for the following reasons, among others:

- The plan will encourage demolition of buildings with rent-regulated and loft law units, disproportionately occupied by lower income and Asian-American residents, and result in their displacement.
- The plan will encourage vertical enlargement of buildings which will contain no affordable housing but will be used to push out existing tenants in buildings.
- This plan has multiple loopholes which not only allow but encourage developers to build with little or no affordable housing, including exemptions for all commercial (office/hotel) space, retail, community facility, and residential space not over 25,000 sq ft/25 units per building per existing zoning lot.
- This plan would allow grossly out of scale new construction, vastly larger than average building size in area.
- The plan would allow and encourage the proliferation of big box chain stores of unlimited size, which will force out existing small businesses and arts/design related uses.
- The plan would allow and encourage eating and drinking establishments of unlimited size, completely changing the character of the neighborhood.
- The plan would allow and encourage the location and construction of all types of university facilities throughout area, which is not only undesirable, but would provide further means to avoid affordable housing requirements. It also violates commitments made and discussed during the SoHo/NoHo 'Envision' process.
- New residential developments under this plan, even if they include "affordable housing," would still be overall less diverse and more expensive than the current neighborhood overall, and thus would harm diversity and equity, not help. But little affordable housing is likely to actually result from the plan, whereas destruction of existing affordable housing and displacement of lower income tenants is almost certain to.

- The plan will accelerate the dilution of the arts-related character of area.
- While the plan envisions and accounts for 3.8 mil sq ft of development (the equivalent of an Empire State and a Chrysler Building), it actually allows over 10 mil. sq ft of new development -- nearly 3 times as much, or nearly 4 Empire State Buildings. Most of this additional development potential is ignored and not accounted for in the City's environmental analysis, and will have huge additional impact on the area with no mitigations in the plan.
- There is broad community support for an alternative approach which would allow for the creation of housing that is more deeply and broadly affordable than what is proposed in the City's plan, at an appropriate scale to the neighborhood and on sites where it would not displace existing residents or existing affordable housing.

As the documents filed by the City make clear, this proposal was initiated at the request of Borough President Brewer and Councilmember Chin. You therefore bear a special responsibility for this plan and the impact it would have, and thus it is especially imperative that you forcefully oppose this. You both also voted for the massive NYU 2031 rezoning, with the promise that the university's expansion would be limited to the sites included in those approvals. This plan, by opening all of SoHo and NoHo to NYU and other university expansion, eviscerates that commitment.

You all participated in the SoHo/NoHo 'Envision' process, led by the Department of City Planning, the Borough President's Office, and Councilmember Chin's office, which led to this proposal. You know that this plan stands in marked contrast to what was discussed and agreed to as part of that process. For this reason as well as those above, it is essential that you oppose this plan.

The residents and businesses you represent, as well as the city as a whole, will be profoundly harmed if this plan is approved. We urge you to stand with your constituents and forcefully oppose this plan.

Sincerely,

David Mulkins, President
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors

Pete Davies, Steering Committee
Broadway Residents Committee

Zishun Ning
Chinatown Working Group

Richard Corman, President
Downtown Independent Democrats

Laura Sewell, Executive Director
East Village Community Coalition

Richard D. Moses, President
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

McDavid Moore
New York City Loft Tenants

Jeanne Wilcke, Co-Chair
NoHo Neighborhood Association

Sean Sweeney, Director
SoHo Alliance

Sara Gobbo, Project Director
SoHo Design District

Micki McGhee
South Village Neighbors

Lynn Ellsworth, Chair and Founder
Tribeca Trust and Humanscale NYC

Andrew Berman, Executive Director
Village Preservation

Cc: State Senator Brian Kavanaugh
State Senator Brad Hoylman
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou
Community Board #2, Manhattan