

*Broadway Residents Coalition - Chinatown Working Group - Cooper Square Committee  
Historic Districts Council - Met Council on Housing - Preservation League of New York State  
SoHo Alliance - TenantsPAC - Village Preservation*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release - June 23, 2021**

**Affordable Housing and Tenant Groups,  
SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown Neighborhood Organizations,  
and Artists and Historic Preservationists  
Slam de Blasio SoHo/NoHo Upzoning Plan,  
Urge “NO” Vote**

Manhattan — Leaders of local, citywide, and statewide affordable housing and tenant organizations, community groups representing SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown, arts organizations, and citywide and statewide historic preservation groups gathered today to slam Mayor de Blasio’s SoHo/NoHo upzoning plan, and to call for it to be voted down as it begins the six-month public review and approval process.

Those gathered, representing the communities and residents who would be most affected by the plan, cited numerous factors in their opposition, including but not limited to:

- Negative impact upon lower-income tenants, especially Asian American tenants, whose rent-regulated and loft-law housing would face extreme pressure for demolition
- Numerous loopholes in the rezoning plan that would allow developers to build without affordable housing, and does not guarantee a single unit of affordable housing will be built
- The plan’s allowances for giant big-box chain retail and eating and drinking establishments, which would push out small businesses and arts organizations
- The plan’s allowances for new development up to two-and-a-half times the size generous current rules already allow, and larger than allowed on Midtown’s Billionaire’s Row
- Incentives the plan would create for the demolition of historic buildings recognized as city, state, and national landmarks

More than a dozen local community groups have proposed a community alternative rezoning plan that would not threaten existing affordable housing or lower-income tenants, and would allow for the creation of deeper and more broadly affordable housing than the City’s plan proposes. Studies of the Mayor’s plan show that it would threaten existing affordable housing and make the neighborhood richer, more expensive, and less diverse than it is now, and likely result in little or no new affordable housing, as it incentivizes new construction without affordable housing.

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**Andrew Berman, Executive Director of Village Preservation**, said: "Mayor de Blasio's sham rezoning plan is a giant giveaway to his developer friends and cronies. Affordable housing, tenant, arts, and neighborhood groups are united in opposing this sham plan, which will destroy existing affordable housing and historic buildings, push out low-income renters and small businesses, and introduce oversized high rises and big-box chain retail. It's a classic de Blasio bait and switch, but he'll be long gone by the time its true effects become clear, with our neighborhoods left to pick up the pieces. Riddled with loopholes, this isn't an affordable housing plan; it's payback from the Mayor to the developers who have supported and funded his campaigns for the last eight years."

**Michael McKee, Treasurer, Tenants Political Action Committee (a statewide housing and tenant group)**, said: "This is a classic de Blasio upzoning, designed to reward big developers while masquerading as an affordable housing plan. If adopted, it will lead to eviction of rent-regulated tenants and a glut of market-rate housing and big box stores. While Tenants PAC believes that affluent neighborhoods must accept greater density to accommodate low- and moderate-income housing, this plan is not that plan and therefore must be opposed. We urge Community Board 2 to reject it."

**Kathleen Wakeham of the Met Council on Housing** (a citywide housing and tenant group), said: "In the wake of a pandemic that has left economic devastation on many New Yorkers, we need true and deep affordable housing, preservation of existing rent-stabilized units, and protections for small businesses. We do not need more luxury housing and further displacement of tenants and small businesses. This Rezoning will negatively impact the tenants and businesses of Soho/NoHo as well as the surrounding communities of Chinatown and the Lower Eastside. The Mayor's Soho/NoHo Rezoning Plan must be voted NO."

**Zishun Ning of the Chinatown Working Group** said: "Falsely framing the SoHo/NoHo Rezoning as a "social justice" plan, Mayor de Blasio is doing injustice to communities of color of Chinatown and the Lower East Side. This plan will bring in luxury high-rises in Chinatown, escalate displacement of low-income families and small businesses, and only benefit bad landlords like the Chu family who own several properties in the proposed upzoning area and notoriously displaced Jing Fong Restaurant. City officials should not be the pawns to serve de Blasio's displacement agenda. They should reject this plan and pass community plans that would stop displacement."

**Jay DiLorenzo, President of the Preservation League of New York State**, said: "The Preservation League stands with our New York City-based preservation colleagues in calling on the city's administration to reconsider the proposed SoHo/NoHo upzoning. As demonstrated in Village Preservation's report, experience has shown that upzoning neighborhoods consistently does not meet the city's projected number of new affordable housing units. While the millionaires who own their buildings are not at risk of displacement, owners of affordable four- to six-story apartment buildings will have a tremendous incentive to sell their property for high-rise development."

**Steve Herrick, Executive Director of the Cooper Square Committee** (a local affordable housing group), said: "We strongly oppose the out-of-scale upzoning of NoHo and SoHo proposed by the Department of

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City Planning (DCP). It does not provide any protections in the zoning text for the residents of the more than 700 units of rent-regulated tenants in the rezoning area who will likely face widespread harassment and displacement pressures. The end result will be no net increase in low-income housing. DCP is also gifting developers with the right to enlarge their buildings as much as 12,500 sq ft without requiring them to include any affordable housing, which will create an incentive to damage the historic community fabric while providing no offsetting public benefit. We stand with SoHo/NoHo in opposing this plan. It cannot proceed without major revisions."

**Sean Sweeney, Director of the SoHo Alliance**, said: "In the waning months of his failed administration, Mayor de Blasio seeks to destroy the iconic charm of SoHo, eviscerate the city's landmarks law, further gentrify the neighborhood, and displace rent-stabilized tenants, so that he can pay back his real-estate campaign donors, who will rack up with this upzoning boondoggle."

**Pete Davies of the Broadway Residents Coalition** said: "We stand in opposition to Mayor de Blasio's SoHo/NoHo Plan, and question the City's reckless proposal to upzone the neighborhoods, now being rammed through in the midst of a pandemic. Does the Mayor think we're too distracted to notice that his scheme eviscerates the creative foundation of these two unique neighborhoods? And did the Department of City Planning expect that its willful violation of the 2019 Charter Amendment for Land Use would go unchallenged? Do they really believe that we cannot see what is glaringly clear? The mayor's plan does not guarantee even a single unit of affordable housing. It grants huge allowances for both disruptive big-box retail and trails of towers running through the neighborhoods. It is built on massive transfers of value and wealth, to the benefit of commercial owners. Even worse, the City's plan singles out residential loft owners by implementing a punitive Loft Conversion Fee. And it leaves renters vulnerable, particularly senior rent-regulated tenants, encouraging displacement and destabilization of the entire area, including nearby neighborhoods. The irresponsible de Blasio rezoning plan for SoHo and NoHo is rotten to its core. It cannot be fixed. It must be rejected."

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