



July 12, 2021

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Mayor Bill de Blasio  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Department of City Planning Chair Marisa Lago  
120 Broadway, 31<sup>st</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10271

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer  
One Centre Street, 19<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10007

City Council Speaker Corey Johnson  
City Hall Office  
New York, NY 10007

City Councilmember Margaret Chin  
101 Lafayette Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10013

City Councilmember Carlina Rivera  
254 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10009

**Re: Reprehensible Comments by Department of City Planning at July 8,  
2021 Community Board #2 Public Hearing**

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Chair Lago, Borough President Brewer, Speaker Johnson, and Councilmembers Chin and Rivera:

As community organizations representing thousands of residents and businesses of SoHo, NoHo, Chinatown and surrounding neighborhoods, we write to condemn the reprehensible comments by the Senior Planner from the Department of City Planning at the Community Board #2 July 8 public hearing on the city's proposed 'SoHo/NoHo' up-zoning plan. [As per this recording](#), she said the Community's alternative plan "is not motivated by a genuine concern for displacement or a genuine desire to introduce more housing affordability" and states that this belief is shared by her colleagues at the Department of City Planning. Present next to her on the dais when these comments were made were the Director of the Manhattan DCP as well as the DCP's senior counsel, and several other DCP officials. None contradicted or retracted this appalling and wholly inappropriate statement.

We are community organizations who advocate for our neighbors and our city. DCP has absolutely no right to impugn our motives or cast aspersions upon our intentions. This is especially insulting given the work that our groups do to protect our neighbors from the displacement that DCP ignores, through its failure to responsibly address impacts of proposed demolition and incentivized eviction by construction. DCP's failure is evident from the lack of local outreach to Chinatown and nearby neighborhoods, a key recommendation set down in the 2019 SoHo/NoHo Envision report. In fact, it is only through the efforts of the very community groups that the DCP official maligns that Chinatown residents even learned of the upzoning plan and its impact on that neighborhood. It is particularly ironic that DCP now tries to shift attention away from the Department's own policies over the past 20 years, policies that ignored enforcement yet allowed for luxury housing - with no affordable housing whatsoever - to infill and overtake the SoHo and NoHo neighborhoods, thereby causing and adding to the very imbalances the city now claims it wants to correct.

As community organizations, we work to promote and retain truly affordable housing in our neighborhoods, especially in the face of policies and actions by this administration and others which harm or fail to protect community residents. The Community Alternative Plan that DCP seeks to impugn and which we continue to call upon to be enacted calls for deeper and broader affordability than what is found in the city's proposal. Our Alternative Plan does not include the city's loopholes and incentives to avoid providing affordable housing. Our Alternative Plan removes all of the huge gifts to real estate developers that are embodied in the city's proposal.

DCP has repeatedly created a hostile environment for the local community. This latest attack by DCP is part of the pattern - now accelerated - that the Department has exhibited throughout the "SoHo/NoHo public engagement" process. Since day one of this so-called "planning" process, DCP has scorned local residents, denying our existence and labeling us as "relics". It has failed to consider the impact on senior residents, aging in place in SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown. It has consistently attempted to discount and disqualify views or approaches which don't comport with the Department's clear end goal here: to radically upzone these neighborhoods for larger market rate development, and to open them to previously prohibited uses like big box chain retail and facilities by NYU.

We demand that DCP and our elected officials repudiate these defamatory and unfounded comments immediately, and that appropriate action be taken against those who made them and implicitly endorsed them at the hearing.

Sincerely,

David Mulkins, President  
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors

Pete Davies, Steering Committee  
Broadway Residents Committee

Zishun Ning  
Chinatown Working Group

Laura Sewell, Executive Director  
East Village Community Coalition

Richard D. Moses, President  
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

Brad Rush, Steering Committee  
Lower Manhattan Loft Tenants

Jeanne Wilcke, Co-Chair  
NoHo Neighborhood Association

Sean Sweeney, Director  
SoHo Alliance

Micki McGee  
South Village Neighbors

Lynn Ellsworth, Chair and Founder  
Tribeca Trust and Humanscale NYC

Andrew Berman, Executive Director  
Village Preservation

Cc: Community Board #2, Manhattan  
Christopher Marte  
Erik Bottcher