

LANDMARKWEST!

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

August 8, 2021

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
1 Centre Street, 19th FL
New York, NY 10007

RE: Proposed SoHo/NoHo Rezoning

Dear Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer,

We appreciate your long record of well-considered stances; it is unquestionable that your positions have the greatest good of the city at their core, and that this thinking informs the many difficult decisions which come before you on a daily basis. We write to you today regarding the City's proposal to rezone SoHo and NoHo under the guise of diversity and affordability—a proposal which the local community board, CB2 has resoundingly rejected.

Examining several recent developments in our own neighborhood of the Upper West Side, we concur with the many findings of Village Preservation, who outline how if implemented, this rezoning plan will in fact instigate development that works at cross-purposes to the rezoning's own stated intentions. Not only jeopardizing decades of preservation efforts, this proposal would fundamentally change the character of the district, which has made it so desirable to begin with.

A large portion of our recent advocacy focus has been to close loopholes in zoning, however this proposal would help foster them, all the while displacing longtime businesses and residents for new construction. One defense we have heard is that there are many landmark protections in this district. Perhaps, but greenlighting such a plan will only further test the already-starved agency. Attend any Tuesday LPC hearing and be reminded that precedent begets precedent, and the City is not wont to impede a developer from full realization of their floor area.

With potential at two-and-a-half times the current rules, existing buildings will be further incentivized to sell out. While developers bemoan the difficulty of construction in New York City, there is no shortage of it, even during a pandemic—so it must be worth the effort! To put this in perspective, look no further than 251 West 91st Street at Broadway. A site carved out from the Riverside-West End Avenue Historic District Extension II, not only were sixteen affordable units destroyed without any public involvement, but 57 luxury units in their stead

will physically loom over their neighbors in the first of two cantilevered projects on the contextually zoned block. Once occupied it will further exacerbate the housing inequalities of our district. If this is contextual in definition, it certainly is not in spirit. Regardless, an 1896 neo-Renaissance French Flat is lost, another out-of-character “intrusion” (to use LPC terminology) in its place, all without public input.

The current City Council Speaker has been clear that the Upper East and Upper West Sides—the #1 and #2 densest neighborhoods in the nation are on deck for a similar rezoning. We do not need to be endorsing plans that work against the vibrancy of our neighborhoods and against our own interests.

Repeatedly we are shown that we cannot rely on the private (for-profit) sector to solve our housing crisis, and the proposed rezoning of SoHo/NoHo is not the panacea either.

We urge you to oppose this plan.

Thank you for your consideration,



Sean Khorsandi

Executive Director, LANDMARK WEST!

cc: Andrew Berman, Village Preservation