

PRESS RELEASE

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**Incoming and Past City Councilmembers
for SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown
Urge Borough President, City Officials
To Reject SoHo/NoHo Rezoning Plan**

Manhattan — Christopher Marte, the winner of the Democratic Primary to represent City Council District 1, Alan Gerson, the most recent past City Councilmember for the First Council District (2002–2009), and Kathryn Freed, the first City Councilmember for the First Council District after it was created in 1991 (1992–2002), held a press conference outside the offices of the Manhattan Borough President today calling upon the Borough President and other city officials to reject the Mayor’s proposed SoHo/NoHo Rezoning plan. The First Council District contains the neighborhoods of SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown, which Mayor de Blasio is seeking to rezone for high-rise development. The Borough President will be holding her virtual public hearing on the rezoning proposal starting at 6 pm this evening, before she issues her recommendation on or before August 26.

Christopher Marte, the Democratic nominee for the First Council District, said, “From the start of this process, the Councilmember, the Mayor, and the Department of City Planning have been intent on ignoring the voices of residents and neighbors of SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown. Instead of listening to the advocacy of tenants’ rights organizations and low-income tenants themselves, they’ve run a PR smear campaign to discredit the people they are meant to represent. No part of this community engagement process has been genuine or in good faith, as City representatives have been condescending and rude, revealing their clear bias for luxury development, every step of the way. I hope the Borough President, my future colleague in the City Council, breaks this precedent of willful ignorance and disrespect, and listens to the people of Lower Manhattan instead of deceitful talking points from special interest groups and DCP.”

Former City Councilmember for the First District Kathryn Freed said, “SoHo is recognized worldwide as one the most successful repurposing of outmoded and underused building stock and the creation of an immensely successful community, ever. This is even more impressive when you consider that it was done by individuals without government help or funding. As someone who’s been part of the fights it took to create and continue this unique community, I am horrified that the City is now intending to destroy it to benefit Big Real Estate. Funny how once building owners were only too happy to get anyone to pay money to live in SoHo. But, as soon as SoHo was successful, big developers began trying to capitalize on it. And now the City is about to give them everything they ever wanted. This is especially galling since the City has specifically avoided allowing real input from that very community that it is so intent on destroying.”

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Alan J. Gerson, Councilmember for the First District from 2002 to 2009, said: "As the most recent past Councilmember for the First District during the eight years following 9/11, I can tell you that in the Lower Manhattan rebuilding effort we maintained and added affordable housing, to protect lower-income residents, especially seniors, and to promote diversity, equity, affordability, and livability in our neighborhoods. This rezoning plan does just the opposite. It would push out and threaten the homes of lower-income residents, who are disproportionately seniors and Asian American, destroy the character of these neighborhoods, specifically the unique remaining arts character, and add little if any affordable housing. It would add tons of big-box chain stores, high-end office buildings and hotels, and luxury condos and rentals, without any plan for environmental sustainability, green space, or infrastructure. That's not what our city needed when I was on the City Council, and it's not what it needs now."

Juan Rivero, Special Projects Director at Village Preservation who emceed the press conference, said, "We're deeply gratified that our future and most recent past City Councilmembers see what a farce and a sham this rezoning is, and how it would do the exact opposite of what the City claims, making this a wealthier, less affordable, less equitable neighborhood. It would drive out the hundreds of remaining lower-income rent-regulated tenants and bring in a flood of high-end chain stores, luxury office buildings, hotels, and condos, and destroy the historic character of this neighborhood, all to line the pockets of the developers who have lobbied and donated generously to the Mayor for this final fire sale giveaway of city real estate."

These incoming and past Councilmembers join a long list of groups opposing the rezoning plan, including TenantsPAC and the Met Council on Housing, the NYC Chapter of the Sierra Club, Community Board 2, the Chinatown Working Group, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Preservation League of New York State, among many others. Opponents of the plan note that it will result in displacement of lower-income tenants (disproportionately seniors and Asian Americans), create little if any affordable housing, and allow for oversized big-box chain stores, high-end offices and hotels, luxury condos and rentals, and NYU dorm expansion in the neighborhood. More information on the rezoning plan and opposition to it can be found at www.villagepreservation.org/soho-noho-facts.

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