



ON THE PROPOSED UPZONING OF SOHO/NOHO

On behalf of Village Independent Democrats, we write to oppose the City's Plan to rezone SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown.

This proposal from Mayor DeBlasio and the City Planning Commission (the City's Plan) will purportedly improve the quality of life for residents and workers in the neighborhood, encourage diversity and create affordable housing, support local artists, and foster the small business. Instead, the City's Plan will displace tenants, decrease diversity, and make our neighborhood less a community and more a luxury hub.

City's Plan = Win for Large Retail Owners. While the City's Plan would allow neighborhood retail on the ground floor as-of-right, it also would lift restrictions on the size of retail and eating establishments, allowing oversized chain retail, bars, and restaurants, killing small businesses. These caps are common in mixed-use neighborhoods throughout the city and this neighborhood, at nearly half residential, should be no different.

City's Plan = Win for Large Property Owners. The City's Plan also will upsize development 2 1/2 times what is currently allowed. This massive upzoning will result in the destruction of currently affordable units by creating an incentive to evict tenants through demolition to clear the way for new development. There are currently over 635 rent-regulated units and a never-counted number of loft-law units within the proposed rezoning area. This plan also fails to expand or legalize Joint Living-Work Quarters for Artists (JLWQA) and instead imposes a \$100 per sq. ft. conversion fee that is financially unitive, particularly to pioneering legally confirming senior citizens who are aging-in-place and who went through considerable hardship to legalized their spaces and buildings under current zoning laws.

City's Plan = Win for Chinatown Property Owners. Nearly half of the city's projected development is projected to take place in Chinatown that the city labels "SoHo East." 50% of these buildings contain rent-regulated apartments. Chinatown is already experiencing the displacement of low-income households. This plan will only increase that pressure.

City's Plan = Win for Office, Dormitory & Luxury Housing Developers. There also are many loopholes in the proposal allowing builders to skip affordable housing altogether. In fact, no affordable housing is guaranteed. Highly profitable development alternatives include retail, commercial/office space, dormitory facilities for NYU and other local universities, and market-rate residences of 25,000 SF or less per lot.



The proposed formula of 75% super-luxury, 25% so-called “affordable” only serves to change the demographics of the city, which used to be a haven for artists, writers, other creative people, and immigrants. It is slowly and surely changing the soul of our city, and it will creep into Greenwich Village and all other neighborhoods if it’s allowed to continue. The plan fails to look at opportunities to build 100% affordable housing by converting hotels or offices to housing or at 2 Howard Street, a federal parking garage in the proposed rezoning area.

Moreover, the City’s Plan would upzone six historic districts, creating a citywide precedent. This proposal is clearly a parting gift from the Mayor to his wealthy real estate donors and large property owners in SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown.

Growing Opposition to City’s Plan. The current list of those individuals and organizations who oppose the City’s Plan are:

Elected Officials

- Representative Jerrold Nadler
- Representative Carolyn Maloney
- State Senator Brad Hoylman
- Assemblymember Deborah Glick
- Borough President Gale Brewer
- Former District 1 City Councilmember, Kathryn Freed
- Former District 1 City Councilmember, Alan Gerson
- Democratic Nominee for District 1 City Council, Christopher Marte

Affordable Housing and Tenant Organizations

- Chinatown Working Group
- Cooper Square Committee
- Met Council on Housing
- New York City Loft Tenants
- Tenants PAC (a statewide housing and tenant group)

Preservation and Community Organizations

- Bowery Block Association
- Broadway Residents Coalition
- Downtown Independent Democrats
- East Village Community Coalition
- Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts
- Historic Districts Council
- Human-Scale NYC
- Landmark West!
- Lower East Side Preservation Initiative
- Municipal Arts Society
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Alexandr Neratoff, Architect (Envision SoHo/NoHo Advisory Group)
- New York Landmarks Conservancy
- NoHo Neighborhood Association
- Preservation League of NYS
- SoHo Alliance
- SoHo Design District
- South Village Neighbors
- Tribeca Trust
- The Victorian Society New York
- Village Preservation

Gale Brewer recently stated she cannot support the proposal in its current form and asked for significant changes. Margaret Chin and Carlina Rivera have asked for significant changes that have yet to materialize. There does exist an alternative plan, the Community Alternative Rezoning Plan, which would not destroy existing affordable housing and



expands broader affordability and adaptive reuse, and does not open the floodgates to giant big box stores and oversized eating and drinking establishments.

Village Independent Democrats support Manhattan Community Board 2's opposition to the City's Plan because it fails to "achieve affordable housing goals and instead incentivizes office, dormitory, and large retail development and will displace existing rent-protected and low-income residents.

Therefore, Village Independent Democrats strongly oppose the current plan and call on our local politicians to also stand against it.