



**Greenwich
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Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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July 14, 2006

Hon. Amanda Burden
Chair, New York City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Draft Rezoning Plan for East Village and Lower East Side

Dear Chair Burden:

After many months of working as part of a Community Board #3 Task Force with the Department of City Planning to formulate a rezoning plan for the East Village and Lower East Side, it was quite heartening to see a draft rezoning plan for the area finally released this Monday. Given the rapid pace of development in these neighborhoods – much of it woefully inappropriate in terms of scale, use, or both – a rezoning which can more effectively preserve neighborhood character is needed as soon as possible.

The draft rezoning appeared to take some very important steps in that direction, though there were several key details and areas about which members of the public had questions and concerns. However, one aspect of the plan about which there was near-universal dissatisfaction was the exclusion of the 3rd Avenue corridor and the blocks to the west, even though the Department of City Planning has heard overwhelmingly from neighborhood residents, community groups, the Community Board, and local elected officials such as Councilmember Mendez that they want this area to be included in the rezoning.

As you know, the current zoning for this area encourages grossly inappropriate development, perhaps best exemplified by NYU's plan for a 26-story dormitory tower. Other out-of-scale high-rises which set back behind plazas and destroy the fabric of this area will likely follow. And under current zoning, such development is more than likely to be hotels, dormitories, or other community facilities, further altering the predominantly residential character of these blocks.

I find it hard to believe that the Department of City Planning finds this type and scale of development appropriate for this area, and wishes to lock in place zoning that will perpetuate and encourage it. The Community Board #3 197A Task Force has made recommendations to the Department about potential rezoning for the area that showed remarkable flexibility and reasonableness, and a willingness to try to accommodate the City's desire to encourage reasonable growth while also addressing the community's concern about grossly out-of-scale development. I have no doubt that the community and its representatives would entertain other potential zoning changes for these blocks with equal flexibility and reasonableness.

-cont.-

Thus I strongly urge the Department to reconsider inclusion of these blocks in its rezoning plan, with an eye towards establishing appropriate height and bulk controls, maintaining streetwalls, and eliminating or reducing the vast preference currently given to hotel and community facility development in the area.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Borough President Scott Stringer
City Councilmember Rosie Mendez
State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Community Board #3, Manhattan
community groups