



BOROUGH PRESIDENT CITY COUNCIL

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STATEMENT FROM BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER AND COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN ON CITY PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVAL OF TWO BRIDGES DEVELOPMENTS

NEW YORK – Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer and Council Member Margaret S. Chin issued the following joint statement Wednesday in response to the City Planning Commission’s approval of three massive developments in the Two Bridges neighborhood, which depart wildly from limits set by the Two Bridges Large-Scale Residential Development Permit and therefore should have been put through a full land-use review.

“Conversations about development and land use are often hidden behind jargon. However, it’s important that we be crystal clear about what the mayor and the City Planning Commission have done today in Two Bridges, an enclave in the Lower East Side characterized by its many working-class, immigrant, and senior residents living in affordable housing built as part of an urban renewal plan.

“Today, Mayor de Blasio’s City Planning Commission voted to approve three new developments that will overwhelm this neighborhood, over our opposition and that of the neighborhood’s Community Board and its representatives in the State Assembly, State Senate, and Congress.

“The rules governing these blocks are laid out in the Two Bridges Large-Scale Residential Development Permit. To change these rules or get an exemption from them, you are supposed to go through a full land use review, including input from the Borough President and, ultimately, approval from the City Council.

“Mayor de Blasio’s City Planning Commission just voted to advance these applications without that review, claiming they are only a ‘minor modification’ to the site.

“First, this practice of exempting ‘minor modifications’ from the full approval process has no basis in law. There is simply no rule written anywhere that allows this, and we told them that two years ago.

“Second, there is no universe where these towers could be considered a ‘minor modification’ to what’s allowed now. This so-called ‘minor modification’ would triple the number of apartments in the neighborhood and quadruple the maximum allowable height to over a thousand feet, resulting in a new building that would be the seventh tallest in the entire city, almost as tall as the Chrysler Building.

“Third, at a June 2017 town hall, the mayor essentially claimed that his administration was legally stuck approving these developments. Even if that were true, which it is not, we gave him a way out, and he could have taken it. On December 29, 2017, we filed a zoning text amendment that would clear up any ambiguity and require a full review for these towers. Nearly a year later, this mayor’s Department of City Planning refuses to even hold a hearing on this proposal, instead demanding the Council and the Borough President’s office waste time and taxpayer dollars jumping through new hoops and red tape.

“We’re not against any and all development in Two Bridges or anywhere else. But rules either exist or they don’t. This is a neighborhood rezoning’s worth of housing, and it’s a wild departure from what the current rules allow. Two Bridges residents deserve the same rights, the same negotiation, and the same level of investment from the city that the residents of East Harlem, Inwood, Far Rockaway, East New York, Jerome Avenue, and other communities facing neighborhood rezonings are given.

“The de Blasio Administration’s insistence that these massive towers must move forward without a real review or negotiation is unlawful, and we are exploring all available options to oppose these developments.”

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