



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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BREWER, CHIN FILE RARE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO PROTECT TWO BRIDGES FROM OUT-OF-SCALE LUXURY DEVELOPMENT

NEW YORK – Late last week, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer and Council Member Margaret S. Chin filed with the Department of City Planning to formally request a zoning text amendment to protect the Two Bridges neighborhood from new, out-of-scale luxury development. The application is the first submitted solely by elected officials in nearly 15 years.

“Council Member Chin and I have been down this road before: when we see loopholes in the law that hurt our communities, we act to close them,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I have great respect for the professionals at the Department of City Planning, but when you look at the Two Bridges community and the way these massive towers would loom over it, you can’t help but understand that ‘minor modification’ has lost its meaning and we need clearer rules.”

“After helping build up this community, Two Bridges residents deserve the right to take back control and shape the future of their neighborhood,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “Since we first heard about these proposed mega-developments, Borough President Brewer and I have made our demands clear: we need a real, transparent public review process. This year, we are delivering on the promise we made to the Two Bridges community by using every tool at our disposal to make their voices heard. These out-of-scale buildings threaten to displace hardworking residents, bring forth irreversible environmental hazards, and accelerate gentrification, which would endanger the very fabric of the Two Bridges community. This text amendment, alongside my latest bill, will work to push for ULURP without unnecessary delays.”

The Two Bridges Large Scale Residential Permit, first issued in 1972, governs two blocks within the former Two Bridges Urban Renewal Area, which was created in 1967. These blocks’ zoning, in effect, was adopted as a single, highly specific special permit. Today, developers are attempting to carve pieces out of this comprehensively-planned area and proceed with out-of-scale luxury developments soaring to heights as high as 950 feet, departing dramatically from the special permit.

While Borough President Brewer, Council Member Chin, and the area's other city, state, and federal elected officials argued in a joint letter to the Department of City Planning that these development proposals constituted major departures from the special permit and therefore required a full public review through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), staff at the Department of City Planning decided to treat these as "minor modifications" exempt from ULURP, requiring only a joint environmental impact review. Brewer, Chin, and attorneys from the Urban Justice Center all argued this interpretation was incorrect.

The draft zoning text amendment submitted by Brewer and Chin would require a new special permit for certain developments in the Two Bridges Large Scale Residential Area, to clarify that large, out-of-scale development proposals are not "minor modifications" to this area's plan and would require public review.

Brewer and Chin filed a draft zoning text amendment and supporting materials with DCP on Thursday, Oct. 12. These were filed along with a cover letter explaining why a number of the pre-application steps DCP can require applicants to go through should be waived, so the application can receive timely consideration before the Two Bridges community is irreversibly changed by these out-of-scale developments. DCP has waived these requirements for government agencies' applications in the past.

Chin also sponsors Int. 1685, legislation supported by Borough President Brewer, which would allow elected officials who submit land use applications to exempt these applications from DCP's time-consuming pre-application filing and meeting requirements.

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