



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN DEMANDS TRANSPARENCY IN URBAN RENEWAL AREAS

Legislation would require public notification about expiring URAs to prevent expirations like the one that led to Two Bridges mega-tower proposals

CITY HALL – At a City Council hearing today, Council Member Margaret S. Chin urged the passage of her bill to notify the public of expiring Urban Renewal Areas (URAs) and to strengthen the community’s response against out-of-character development. Introduced in April, Council Member Chin’s legislation would require the City to provide advance notice of the expiration, and would mandate the establishment of a publically accessible online database with information about URAs.



The legislation comes at a critical juncture in Council Member Chin’s efforts against three proposed mega-towers in the Two Bridges neighborhood. Those proposed developments, which would add more than 1,000 mostly luxury units, lie within the boundaries of an Urban Renewal Area that was allowed to expire in 2007 without any community notification. Later, a plan to extend the URA was withdrawn without any community input, before Council Member Chin took office.

Council Member Margaret S. Chin said, “Communities, not just City Hall, need to be notified about changes that affect their families and their neighborhoods. If our community had known in advance about the expiration of the Two Bridges URA back in 2007, imagine the difference it would have made in our efforts to fight out-of-context development. We must take action now to ensure that all communities, especially those that are predominately low income and of color, are equipped with the knowledge and

tools to protect their neighborhoods. Though we cannot turn back time to prevent the expiration of the Two Bridges URA, this legislation is integral to my mission to keep similar situations from happening again, and to carry on the fight by continuing to demand a full public review, including an up-or-down City Council vote, on the megatowers at Two Bridges.”

Intro 1533 requires that the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) notify relevant community boards, borough presidents, and council members when an urban renewal plan is going to expire. The bill would also require HPD to post online information about the status of urban renewal plans, including any approved or pending extensions of expiration dates.

If passed, Intro 1533 would empower communities all over the City with vital information so they can pro-actively advocate for sensible development – unlike the proposals in Two Bridges.

Council Member Helen Rosenthal said, “Our development process is supposed to remove arbitrary decision-making and make the future of our neighborhoods more predictable. But unless the community is able to react to changes like the expiration of an Urban Renewal Plan in real time, it ends up feeling as arbitrary and unpredictable to our neighbors as anything else. I want to thank Council Members Chin and Reynoso for their leadership on this issue.”

Council Member Antonio Reynoso said, “Active urban renewal areas are still present all over the city, yet most people don’t even know they exist. This lack of transparency may result in residents losing yet another opportunity to have a say in how development takes place in their community. This bill will help increase transparency and ensure that New Yorkers can access important information they need to inform planning decisions.”

Council Member Mark Levine said, “Providing New Yorkers with information about Urban Renewal Areas in their community is vital to preserving the integrity of our neighborhoods. As the representative of a URA, ensuring that my community is aware of what that designation means and how it can affect the neighborhoods is vitally important.”

Council Member Ritchie Torres said, “This bill gives New Yorkers the chance to preserve and continue renewal programs that serve to create more economically stable communities. Progress should not be swept out from under our feet simply because a predetermined timeline is coming to a close.”

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