

El Barrio Unite
Roberto Anazagasti
18 East 118th Street
New York, NY 10029

The Honorable Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker, New York City Council
105 East 116th Street
New York, NY 10029

April 8, 2015

RE: El Barrio's Opposition to the East River Plaza Residential Expansion Proposal

Dear Honorable Speaker Mark-Viverito:

We the residents from El Barrio, Harlem and the South Bronx who have supported your election to the City Council, are united in opposition to the East River Plaza Residential Expansion. Because of the impending changes in zoning to East Harlem, we know that a development of this size and magnitude will change our beloved El Barrio forever. The East River Plaza Residential Towers project is expected to include approximately 1,000 to 1,200 mixed units towering up to 47 stories above the platform. The construction of the three towers will require a number of rezoning and mapping changes that will require permit through the city's ULURP process.

On March 25, 2015, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and 30 elected officials throughout New York City wrote a joint-letter to City Planning Commission Chair Carl Weisbrod, regarding "Zoning for Quality and Affordability Text Amendment-CEQR No. 15DCP104Y." The letter outlined our political figures' concerns regarding rezoning and up-zoning for affordable housing in NYC. The proposal relies heavily on the construction of new developments which in turn could force rent stabilized units to disappear and further displace many of our residents. The letter, originating from Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer called for the Scope of Work to evaluate the impact of Zoning proposal on rent stabilized units, as we cannot allow new developments to drive up rents in already existing buildings. Another concern of the elected officials is the issue of upzoning in contextual districts which "By increasing height limits across the board, this administration is undermining these agreements made between previous administrations and neighborhood residents." The Inclusionary Housing plan allows developers to gain bonus floor area while providing only a small portion of affordable housing units.

We know that the East River Plaza Residential proposal falls directly into place with the Zoning for Quality and Affordability Text amendment plan. As they propose to have 20% affordable units and ask for changes in zoning text to increase their floor area ratio. The developers, Blumenfeld Development Group (BDG) and Forest City Ratner (FCR) had met with the community to discuss their plans, but have failed to show how their proposal will benefit our community. They have failed to show how creating 800 market rate apartments in a gigantic obscure structure will help to keep our residents in El Barrio in their homes or will help solve the affordable housing crisis affecting all New Yorkers as per neglecting Community Board 11's 197a Plan. They have also failed to show that the health of our residents will be

protected from the dust and debris from the construction or that the increased traffic on Pleasant Avenue will not affect our community's already skyrocketing asthma rates.

As stated above, this letter was signed by nearly all elected officials in Manhattan, yet **your signature was missing**. We cannot express enough our utter disappointment that you chose to ignore the concerns of our community and of your colleagues in elected positions. We take your refusal to be a part of the collaborative effort by those that sent the letter as your allegiance to the Mayor's hasty plan to push forward affordable housing policy; that at this point seems to only benefit the greedy developers that wish to make a profit on the backs of low income New Yorkers. Furthermore, we take your decision as statement that you are in favor of the East River Plaza Residential expansion.

We have repeatedly written letters to you and other elected officials requesting that our elected officials take a stance on this proposal but our requests have been ignored. We've considered all the different courses of actions we might take. Our group plans to move ahead and file an Article 78 Administrative Appeal.

As our city council representative and as Speaker you hold enormous influence over the future of this project. You have touted your affordable housing plans and interest to keep El Barrio rich in culture and diversity for years, yet we know that this proposal will not keep rents low in East Harlem nor preserve our community and its heritage. You are the one that can stop this project.

We do not accept the displacement of our residents, using Affordable Mixed-used development using Low Income Housing Tax Credits and the 421-a program as a justification to exploit our neighborhoods. We reject this proposed development as an ineluctable approach of gentrification. We are committed to the prevention of economic deprivation and will fight for longer term solutions in order to protect your most vulnerable New Yorkers that are simply to be swept away.

Madam Speaker, join us in the peoples cause to "**STOP DISPLACEMENT AND GENTRIFICATION**". Choose us and show the City and the State what fighting for democracy and decency against greed looks like.

Please feel free to contact El Barrio Unite at (212)427-0555 for any questions and concerns.

Sincerely,

Roberto Anazagasti
El Barrio Unite