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March 24, 2015

Carl Weisbrod, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Weisbrod:

Thank you so much for holding this hearing to solicit input for City Planning’s “Zoning for Quality and Affordability” proposal—I have a few concerns. While I share the Mayor’s vision to build more affordable housing, we can’t leave the community out of the process. As is the case with every community in New York City, the Upper West Side has its share of unique qualities.

Over the years, my community joined together and landmarked large swaths of the district. The proposed zoning plan could undo our landmarked areas—and, similarly, contextual zones. We are looking for protection of Landmark Districts and Contextual Zones—is that contemplated in the proposal?

The “Zoning for Quality and Affordability” proposal also provides for a generalized Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which would be applied city-wide. The neighborhoods of New York are as diverse as its people, so it’s hard to imagine a meaningful DEIS that would be bare bones enough to apply city-wide. To this point, I would respectfully request that the DEIS be applied on a case-by-case basis. The **community input** will be invaluable.

I would also appreciate a more in-depth discussion about the “Transfer of Development Rights.” Again, there are situations on the UWS where it is imperative that the air right transfer be within a reasonable distance; and other situations where the highest economic value must be granted off-site. I would ask that any changes to the “transfer of development rights” allow for additional flexibility and community discussion.

Does this plan contemplate transportation mitigation for low- and middle-income families? Can this plan allow for transportation and traffic studies to be conducted prior to determining whether or not a location will have a parking requirement?

And, lastly, as events have unfolded over the past year, you won't be surprised to hear my plea that the affordable units built must be on-site with equal amenities and a single entrance.

As you know, too many times developers are given legal opportunities to double-dip into the city, state, and federal coffers, and I want to be sure this practice is not perpetuated by these zoning changes.

Thank you for your time, and I would again stress that I share your goal to increase the number of affordable housing units in the city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Rosenthal". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Helen Rosenthal
Council Member, District 6