

L.I.N.A

Little Italy Neighbors Association

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August 13, 2008

To: Amanda Burden, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street New York, NY 10007-1216

RE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ZONING MAP
Discussed at a Public Hearing August 13, 2008

The wealth of New York City is its cultural life, which is not limited to museums, art galleries and theaters: It develops in its Neighborhoods. People, tourists (this seems to be the orientation of the present administration: to make the City into a caricature of itself, a playland for adults that brings revenue and economic development) don't come only to see the Statue of Liberty and the skyscrapers, Broadway shows and Yankee games. They are attracted by the lifestyle they experience strolling through Greenwich Village, Harlem, Little Italy, Chinatown, the East Village and the Lower East Side, just to mention some that are easily accessible in Manhattan. Part of this appeal, for visitors and New Yorkers alike, is buildings that are not very tall and the feeling of being in a neighborhood, not in a cement canyon swarming with windows. I urge you to take the long view and not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs: New York City is what it is today for its peculiar capability to preserve the past and making it a living asset, as well as inventing the future. The living memory of its greatness is buildings and its Urban Grid: Architect Rem Koolhaas has called Manhattan the Rosetta Stone of the XX century. Don't make it the Deadwood of the XXI.

Zoning is the tool that the City, in its entirety, including the diverse communities of its neighborhood, utilizes to preserve the richness of the urban ecosystem; even in its present form, zoning does not contain "creative" developers, who manage to build horrors in the middle of special zoning districts and even landmarked ones, witness, especially, recent buildings along Houston Street both in SoHo and Little Italy. Zoning, as a safeguard to the Common Good, needs to be strengthened, not weakened. There is too much building going on as it is; the City is a socio-economic ecosystem where balance is being upset by the amount and quality of development: how many multimillion dollar condominiums, how many "luxury rentals" can the City afford? As recent events demonstrate, unchecked greed cannot proliferate forever, especially in real estate. And the proposed changes do not take into consideration the impact on traffic, the need for parking, (already a rare commodity in Manhattan, very scarce as it is) the burden on sanitation and other services. I urge the commission to scale down and take a preservationist approach: as it is, Manhattan is a reservation of cultural diversity.

Upsetting the balance will make it a dull place to live, which will in turn cause the super-rich kind of settlers the present administration seems bent on attracting, want to find other, more "interesting" playground cities. Long-time residents are not amused and as the living wealth (and beacon) that attracts the cash cows, you, the government, should be looking to retain them, not displace them by making room for more top revenue paying customers, especially now that the boom and bust cycle of our economy seems oriented toward the latter.

In particular, the Little Italy Neighbors Association supports the plan presented by Manhattan Community Board 3 and the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors for the EXTENSION OF THE LITTLE ITALY SPECIAL ZONING DISTRICT TO THE EAST SIDE OF THE BOWERY, BETWEEN BLEECKER AND CANAL STREETS.

Sante Scardillo
For LINA, Little Italy Neighbors Association

