March 1, 2018

Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
One Centre Street, 19th floor South
New York, NY 10007

Re: ULURP 180201ZMM, 180202ZRM, and 180203ZSM, 124 East 14th Street, aka Union Square ‘Tech Hub’

Dear Borough President Brewer:

We write to strongly urge you to include a request for zoning protections for the neighborhood to the south of the proposed Tech Hub, between Union Square and Astor Place, as a condition for your approval of the rezoning needed for that development.

This area has seen increasing pressure for out-of-scale and out-of-character development, including 300 ft. tall luxury condo and office buildings, and 300 room hotels. This is at least partly a result of the expansion of the tech industry’s ‘Silicon Alley’ into the area, as well as the announcement of the city’s intention to locate a “tech hub” on the south side of 14th Street. Without these protections, the Tech Hub will accelerate the process of inappropriate development in the area, changing the character of the neighborhood.

In response, the proposed zoning protections would do the following:

- Eliminate the current incentives for large commercial (hotel, office) developments in predominantly residential areas.

- Eliminate the current loophole which encourages developers to sidestep existing affordable housing incentives by building purely market-rate commercial developments, to which the affordable housing provisions do not apply.

- Add affordable housing incentives where none currently exist.

- Put in place reasonable height limits for new development where none currently exist.

These are all desirable and necessary changes that would protect the character of the neighborhood and encourage and maintain socio-economic diversity. To approve the proposed Tech Hub without such zoning protections would doom this area to rapid transformation and commercial overdevelopment, and forgo the opportunity to create and protect existing affordable housing. This is especially necessary given that the proposed rezoning for the Tech Hub site would transform it from predominantly residential to commercial zoning, and eliminate the opportunity for the site to include affordable housing as many had long hoped for.
Sincerely,

Andrew Berman, Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Damaris Reyes, Executive Director
Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)

Jonathan Westin, Executive Director
New York Communities for Change

Laura Sewell, Director
East Village Community Coalition

Ryan Gilliam, Executive Director
Fourth Arts Block

Marilyn Appleberg, President
10th & Stuyvesant Block Association

Steve Herrick, Executive Director
Cooper Square Committee

Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director
Historic Districts Council

Charles Barnstool
East Village Independent Merchant’s Association (EVIMA)

Richard Moses, President
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

David Mulkins, President
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors

Judith Zabrowski, President
East 9th Street A-1 Block Association

Cc: City Councilmember Carlina Rivera
    State Senator Brad Hoylman
    State Senator Liz Kruger
    State Assemblymember Deborah Glick