



**FROM:** ERFA – East River Fifties Alliance  
[www.ERFA.nyc](http://www.ERFA.nyc)

**CONTACT:** Richard Edmonds  
LAK Public Relations, Inc.  
[redmonds@lakpr.com](mailto:redmonds@lakpr.com)  
212-575-4545

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **EAST RIVER 50s ALLIANCE PROPOSAL WINS BACKING FROM LANDMARK WEST!**

Upper West Side Civic Group Joins Municipal Art Society, Friends of Upper East Side Historic Districts, CIVITAS, New Yorkers for a Human Scale City, and other civic associations as advocate for right-zoning in the East River 50s

**New York, July 17, 2017** – The East River Fifties Alliance (ERFA) announced today that it has gained the full, formal endorsement of LANDMARK WEST!, the decades-old organization whose record of achievement for community preservation on Manhattan’s Upper West Side includes the creation of the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, advocating for contextual zoning and, recently, the continued protection of the former First Church of Christ, Scientist from a condo conversion that would have destroyed defining elements.

In a July 12 letter to Marisa Lago, Chair of the City Planning Commission, LANDMARK WEST! urged Chair Lago and her fellow commissioners to approve ERFA’s unprecedented citizens’ application to the City of New York for a zoning change to prevent the construction of supertall residential towers in the East River Fifties area and to encourage community diversity.

Co-signed by Kate Wood, President, and Sean Khorsandi, Interim Executive Director, the letter stated: “The ERFA proposal is a serious, thoughtful response to the spread of towers of extraordinary height that is transforming our city’s skyline, changing the scale of our streets, straining infrastructure, raising serious questions about safety, challenging sustainability, and casting shadows.”

It added, “The unchecked, out-of-scale, ‘as-of-right’ nature of these structures underscores the need for a hard look at policies that facilitate the disruption of the quality of life on our streets by blotting out the sun. There are few areas on this planet where a 1,000-foot tower represents regulation, or a limit on building size or height. There are even fewer where it would be viewed as a harbinger of a pleasant environment. Under no definition could the appearance of such a colossus in long-established residential neighborhoods such as the tidy enclaves of Sutton and Beekman Place yield anything else but catastrophe.”

Alan Kersh, ERFA President said that LANDMARK WEST!’s support is a powerful and influential force in the fight against the proliferation of Billionaire’s Row superscrapers into quiet residential neighborhoods. He said, “Our two-year campaign gains an enormous amount of momentum with this endorsement. We welcome the support of Landmark West! as part of our coalition that also includes

Municipal Art Society, Friends of Upper East Side Historic Districts, CIVITAS, and New Yorkers for a Human Scale City.

ERFA's proposed zoning change application has been officially – and unanimously -- approved by the full board of Community Board 6, and the Office of the Manhattan Borough President. State Senator Liz Krueger, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and New York City Councilmembers Ben Kallos and Daniel Garodnick are co-applicants.

The City Planning Commission is expected to hold a public hearing on the application later this summer. If approved by the Commission, the application is expected to win approval from the City Council. At that point, it would become part of the City's zoning law.

The East River Fifties – roughly the area between 52nd and 58th/59th Streets east of First Avenue -- is the only residential neighborhood in New York City zoned R10 (the City's highest-density zoning category) without any type of contextual protection for its residential side streets. For this reason, it is uniquely vulnerable to the development of supertall towers, a building form that was neither contemplated nor feasible when the local zoning district was created in 1961.

ERFA, founded in 2015 by residents of the East River Fifties community, has seen a steady growth of widespread interest and support for its goals, which now comes from 2176 supporters in 347 buildings within and beyond the rezoning area.

Robert Shepler, Co-chairman of the ERFA Leadership Committee, said, "The coalition's proposal embraces the City's goals of planned growth, increased affordability and contextual protection for residential neighborhoods. It is among the first, if not the first, proposal from a neighborhood coalition to combine these goals.

"Right now, R10 zones throughout the city only create about 4-5% affordable units with each new development. That does not meet the city's needs and gives away too much to developers. The coalition embraces the Mayor's goal of creating affordable housing in new developments, and the proposed zoning change supports that goal. If fully implemented, the ERFA plan would more than double the amount of affordable housing in new developments in the East River Fifties neighborhood," Mr. Shepler said."

In the ERFA proposal, new building heights in the East River Fifties would be capped at 260 feet. The height of more than 91% of the existing buildings in the proposed Rezoning Area is equal to or less than the proposed 260-foot maximum limit, a statistic that has supported contextual rezoning approved by the Commission for other neighborhoods. (To be sure, there are taller existing buildings in the area, but they are largely located on or close to the wide commercial corridors of First Avenue or 59th Street, which are expressly excluded from the proposal in keeping with the City's practice of allowing more height and density on such corridors.)

The ERFA proposal is expected to generate 823 units of new housing, almost as many as projected under the existing R10 zoning (888 units) using the Planning Commission's required assumptions. If the 888-unit projection is adjusted to reflect the ACTUAL plan filed by the developer for the 58th Street site (which provides for luxury-sized apartments), only 708 units would be projected for the Rezoning Area under the existing zoning – which is actually LESS than the amount projected under ERFA's proposal.

**About ERFA**

ERFA is a nonprofit corporation which represents 45 member buildings, numerous civic groups, and more than 2,100 individual supporters residing in 347 buildings within and beyond the proposed rezoning area -- all dedicated to preserving community character and affordable housing. Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Councilman Dan Garodnick, Councilman Ben Kallos and N.Y.S. Senator Liz Krueger have provided, and continue to provide, guidance and leadership to the rezoning effort.

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