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Nassau Leaders Unite against Gov’s High Density Housing Plan – Officials Stand Together to Denounce Suburb-Threatening Proposal

Supervisors Clavin, DeSena, Saladino and Mayor Panzenbeck Voice Outrage over Negative Impacts to Environment, Traffic, Schools and More

Manhasset, NY – Teaming up in a united front against the resurgence of Governor Kathy Hochul’s proposal for high density housing in single-family neighborhoods on Long Island, Town of Hempstead Supervisor Don Clavin, Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Jennifer DeSena, Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino and City of Glen Cove Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck stood with local homeowners to denounce another plan from Albany that the officials refer to as an “attack on the suburbs.” The officials stood in front of a modest single-family home that would be subjected to high density zoning, allowing large-scale apartment buildings to be developed right next door.

“Every year, it’s the same story,” said Town of Hempstead Supervisor Don Clavin. “Albany proposes an unwanted plan to turn Long Island into the sixth borough of New York City. Enough is enough. Residents take root on Long Island because it’s what they want: a single-family home suburban quality of life. We’re not going to let Albany force us into changing our residential neighborhoods into citylike landscapes.”

Announced in the recent State of the State address, Governor Kathy Hochul outlined a plan that would *force* Long Island municipalities to allow massive development projects to ensure a targeted housing growth of three percent over three years. The developments would forcibly be approved through the Governor’s newly created “Fast Track Approval” program that comes into play when the municipality does not reach its 3 percent housing growth goal. The program, which is only available for multifamily projects, exists to override the authority of local zoning law, meaning multifamily housing will be approved in areas zoned for single-family housing.

“Governor Hochul’s housing plan is yet another ill-conceived proposal designed to turn Nassau County into New York City and unilaterally flood our communities with thousands of apartments and high-density zoning,” Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Jennifer DeSena said. “This proposal is absolutely unacceptable and not only is it inconsistent with the character of our communities, but it will also negatively impact the environment, traffic, emergency services, and surely overcrowd our schools. I urge the public to join us in the fight against this plan and contact the Governor’s Office and their local state officials. The future of our suburban communities are at stake, and we need local control, not Hochul control.”

Under the proposal, Nassau County – home to more than 478,000 housing units as reported in the U.S. Census (updated July 2021) – would beckon an estimated 14,340 additional housing units over the course of three years. What’s more, under the “Fast Track Approval” program, municipalities would be stripped of their ability to combat the unwanted housing developments. An influx of 14,340 additional housing units over three years in Nassau County, already one of the most densely populated counties in the world, would increase the amount of traffic on roadways, the number of children in schools and the strain on local infrastructure.

Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino stated “We must Save Our Suburbs from this ill-conceived plan as it would overcrowd classrooms, greatly increase traffic and cars parked on our streets, strain emergency services, and threaten the environment. Removing the rights of residents to have a say over the future of their communities is a direct threat to democracy, especially when you silence the voices of residents and replace their say over development projects with an unaccountable, bureaucratic board located hundreds of miles away in Albany. We call on all New Yorkers to stand with us in demanding that single-family zones remain intact throughout our State.”

In addition to the proposed housing growth goals, Governor Hochul outlined a plan that includes a forcible rezoning of areas within a half-mile radius of Long Island Rail Road stations. This plan would upzone neighborhoods to increase population density and allow for large scale apartments to be developed. There are currently 58 Long Island Rail Road stations in Nassau County, which would equate to a total of 29 miles of rezoning, allowing for multifamily apartment developments to be built in the areas zoned for single-family residences. According to the outraged officials, this proposal is not in tune with the wishes of the area residents.

“It is my belief that development and zoning changes should be the decision of local municipalities,” said Glen Cove City Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck. “The New York Housing Compact requires local participation and seemingly will provide incentives to achieve housing growth in every community of the State! Municipalities with MTA railroad stations will be required to rezone to allow for higher density residential development! Residential zoning change decisions will no longer be the decision of local governments but will be decided by Governor Hochul’s mandate! This will destroy our suburban way of life!”

As if stripping “home rule” from municipalities was not enough, the plan also calls for an “expedited environmental review process” for projects built in the forcibly rezoned areas. As the elected officials mentioned, this is a serious concern for local governments as they are keyed in on the needs and balances of local neighborhoods – rushing unwanted projects could be vastly detrimental to the surrounding environment.

“This is a prime example of governing from a distance. Governor Kathy Hochul does not know what is best for Long Island and is openly infringing on municipal control of zoning regulations,” concluded Clavin. “This is an assault on the suburbs. We will not be quiet in the face of overdevelopment. We will take the fight to Albany and continue to advocate for Long Island neighbors.”