



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

*Founded in 1980, the
Society fights to protect
the architectural heritage
and cultural history
of the Village.*

232 East 11th Street
New York, New York
10003

(212) 475-9585
fax: (212) 475-9582

gvshp@gvshp.org
www.gvshp.org

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December 16, 2005

Lynne P. Brown
Senior Vice-President for University Relations and Public Affairs
New York University
70 Washington Square South, 1211
New York, New York 10012

Dear Vice-President Brown,

I write to follow up on yesterday's meeting with you, Vice-President for Campus Planning Sharon Greenberger, and Associate Vice-President for University Relations Alicia Hurley regarding various development and planning issues with the University.

I and the members of the GVSHP Executive Committee with whom you met appreciate the beginning of this dialogue over some of the long-standing and recently arisen development issues which have been of great concern to us and many in the community. We understand that this dialogue will be continued in large and small settings not only with us, but with other members of the community. We see the appointment of the new Vice-President for Campus Planning, and the pledge the University is making to earlier involve the community in discussions about future developments, as an important opportunity, and we are glad that the University is making a commitment to both philosophical and substantive changes in its approach to community relations, especially on planning issues.

However, as was stated at the meeting, this will only improve the current situation if it results in tangible improvements in the University's actual handling of developments and future planning in this community. A lack of substantive changes will only harden already deeply-held convictions that the University's development is inherently in conflict with the needs and desires of the surrounding community, and that those needs and desires are not taken into account by the University. Thus while we welcome these new gestures, we want to make clear that they alone will not be sufficient to change the attitudes about or realities of university/community relations, nor will they affect what we see as the very real difficulties of the university's continued growth in our neighborhoods.

Along these lines, I would like to memorialize some of what we discussed, particularly as we look forward to moving ahead:

1) **East 12th Street Development** – GVSHP feels strongly that the size

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and bulk of the proposed building, and it's seeming incompatibility with its surroundings, is the single most important issue for this site, and we strongly urge you to consider a reduction in the size and bulk. How to mass the building, and the design of the façade, are also critical issues to us. We are pleased that you have stated that you intend to meet on an ongoing basis with GVSHP, the community board, neighbors and groups such as the St. Ann's Committee, to discuss these and other concerns attached to the project and to try to address them. We look forward to next steps where the university can provide basic drawings and schematics so an informed discussion can begin about some of these issues. However, we reiterate that the 26 stories and nearly 200,000 square feet currently being discussed for the site present very serious baseline problems which must be overcome in order for there to be a successful outcome to this process.

2) Potential Development/Preservation of the Silver Towers Superblock – GVSHP continues to be very concerned about the possible development of the Bleecker and LaGuardia Place supermarket site in the Silver Towers superblock, as we feel strongly that the original I.M. Pei design for the complex must be respected and deferred to. The supermarket is a critical location within that complex, and any development there could have a tremendous visual impact upon the complex. We also recognize that neighbors have additional concerns regarding light, air, and usage of that site which must also be addressed. We appreciate that the University has committed to engage in substantive discussions about these concerns before considering moving ahead with any development plan for that site, which you stated do not currently exist, though the university has indicated that they fully expect to eventually develop that site. We also urge that the University re-open discussions with the community about the future of the superblock's 'green strips,' and are pleased that you have committed to do so. We strongly urge you to reach out to the Community Board and the other interested parties such as the block's residents and gardeners about making this happen.

3) Need for the University to Find Location for Future Growth Outside of the Village – As we discussed, we see an inherent conflict between the university's continued expansion in Greenwich Village/the East Village/Noho and the community's desire to maintain it's present character. We also see the ability of the community to negotiate with the University on details of new developments hamstrung by the understanding that any resolution will likely simply be followed by similar developments one after the other in our communities, altering their physical landscape and character. We therefore STRONGLY urge the University to work with the City to pursue establishment of satellite campuses for your facilities in locations outside of the greater Village area, which will not only allow the University greater flexibility to meet its space needs but end the trend of the University eating up more and more of our neighborhood. We appreciate that the University is looking at ways to re-use existing buildings rather than develop new ones, and is considering siting some future facilities such as faculty housing outside of our neighborhood. These are small steps in the right direction;

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however, faculty housing is only a tiny percentage of the University's space needs and, ironically, presents some of the fewest concerns re: impact upon neighborhood character because it does not utilize the community facility bulk bonus and involves permanent or semi-permanent residential housing. A much more substantive move towards shifting new growth to outside of this community is necessary if the University is to establish ongoing compatibility with its neighbors.

4) **Continued Dialogue on Planning Issues** – GVSHP would like to meet on a regular basis with the University to discuss long-rang planning. We feel strongly that regular meetings will help concretize the process the University is committing itself to of regular consultation and communication with the community and ensure that it does not simply slip by the wayside. We are glad that you have indicated that you also intend to approach this dialogue in this manner, and we look forward to establishment of a regular forum and schedule for this dialogue.

I look forward to hearing back from you about all of these issues, and to continuing our dialogue about them. As stated previously, however, the University must follow this dialogue with substantive actions regarding the way it proceeds with currently planned developments and future developments in order to establish the trust and working relationship that you have spoken of between the community and the University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Berman", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Sharon Greenberger
Alicia Hurley