



Greenwich
Village
Society for
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Preservation

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STATEMENT OF ANDREW BERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
IN OPPOSITION TO LANDMARKS APPLICATION BY NYU
FOR 400 FT. TALL HOTEL/RESIDENCE TOWER
IN SIVLER TOWERS COMPLEX
November 8, 2010

Good evening Community Board members. I am here tonight to urge you, in the strongest of terms, to reject NYU's application for landmarks approval to erect a 400 ft. tall hotel/residence tower on the landmarked, I.M. Pei-designed Silver Towers complex, which would be the tallest building ever constructed in Greenwich Village.

The proposed oversized, out-of-context development has no place on this site. It is wrong from a landmarks perspective. It is wrong from a land use perspective, as it would place large-scale commercial uses in a residential zone where they are prohibited. It is wrong from an open space perspective, as it would require precious public green space to be given to NYU for development. It is wrong from a planning perspective, as it would require long-standing zoning protections which require the preservation of open space be lifted in an open space-starved neighborhood. It is wrong from a historical perspective, as it goes against the very premise under which NYU was allowed to build the three existing towers on this site in the first place. It is wrong from a community relations perspective, as it goes against everything that community groups which met with NYU for over four years to discuss their 2031 plan urged the university to do. It is just plain wrong.

To add insult to injury, NYU is now also trying to hold a gun to our head, telling us to pick our poison, by threatening to build on the adjacent supermarket site if they are not given landmarks approval to build where they propose. But this is a false dichotomy NYU wants us to buy into, and I urge you not to. NYU cannot build on the supermarket until at least 2021 under current restrictions for that land. And this development, like much of the overly grandiose plans NYU is seeking to foist upon the Village with its 20 year expansion plan, rightly belongs in places like the Financial District, where it would be contextual, and would actual be welcomed by leaders of that community.

NYU's 2031 20-year expansion plan would double the university's rate of spatial growth in and around the Village, adding more than an Empire State Building's worth of space in just the next two decades. Many of us spent the last four years meeting with the university in the hopes that they would actually listen to our feedback and do things differently. They have not.

This 400 ft. tall tower, as huge as it is, is just the nose of the camel. Even if it stood alone, it should be soundly rejected – as you know, 400 ft. tall towers have

no place in landmarked areas such as these, and NYU's contention that Pei's design is somehow incomplete and awaiting their intervention would be laughable if it were not so serious. But this is also the leading edge of a larger NYU plan that will simply overwhelm and change forever this neighborhood. It is totally wrong and absolutely and unnecessary, especially in light of the alternatives which NYU could, but is refusing to, consider.

I urge you to say no to NYU, no to these misguided, inappropriate plans, and send this entire project back to the drawing boards where it belongs.