



Greenwich
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Preservation

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PRESS RELEASE

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NYU FACULTY, STUDENTS, TENANTS and ALUMNI,
and LOWER MANHATTAN COMMUNITY LEADERS CALL UPON
BOROUGH PRESIDENT STRINGER TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARING
AND VOTE 'NO' ON NYU EXPANSION PLAN

Manhattan – Leaders of community groups throughout Lower Manhattan, and representatives of NYU faculty, students, alumni, and tenants gathered on the steps of City Hall today to call upon Borough President Stringer to hold a public hearing and vote ‘NO’ on the NYU 2031 Village Expansion Plan. Borough President Stringer has until April 11 to issue his recommendation on the plan. While the Borough President is not required to hold a public hearing, he has done so with similar land use applications such as the Columbia Expansion Plan and the Solow development in the East 30’s. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) also delivered more than 2,500 petition signatures to the Borough President urging him to reject the plan following the press conference.

NYU is seeking to build 2.5 million square feet of new space – the equivalent of the Empire State Building – on the blocks south of Washington Square Park. However, the university is currently prohibiting from adding any new buildings to these blocks due to zoning restrictions and urban renewal deed restrictions which govern how the land can be used, and the original terms under which this formerly-publicly-owned land was given to NYU. NYU is seeking to change the area’s zoning from residential to commercial, to eliminate and build upon open space they are required to provide, and to acquire and build upon publicly-owned open space.

Thousands of people have expressed opposition to the NYU plan and the public approvals required for it at Community Board public hearings, and in letters, phone calls, and petition signatures to elected officials. Objections have focused on the oversaturation of NYU facilities in the area, the impact of the addition of a huge amount of new NYU facilities, a hotel, and people to the area, and the fact that better alternatives for the university and the city, such as locating these facilities in the Financial District, have not been considered by NYU.

“It’s clear that the overwhelming sentiment from Lower Manhattan residents, as well as from NYU’s own faculty, workers, students, and tenants, is against this scheme.

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NYU is seeking to undo the terms under which they were given this public land in order to shoehorn in 2.5 million square feet of space and turn the Village into Midtown. This plan is not only wrong for the Village, it's wrong for New York City and wrong for the university. We call upon Borough President Stringer to hold a public hearing on this enormously flawed proposal, to vote 'NO,' and send it back to the drawing board," said Andrew Berman, Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

"NYU wants to overturn zoning restrictions they agreed to decades ago. They want to strip away years of regulation that protected Greenwich Village from exactly the kind of development NYU is proposing. Our elected officials must not let the campaign contributions from NYU-connected real estate and political forces sway their judgment. Do not strip away the protections that were specifically put in place to protect our residents, our businesses and our neighborhood," said District Leader Jenifer Rajkumar of the Downtown Independent Democrats.

"NYU's proposal is not sound for the community or the University. The funding has not been secured and we are concerned that this will be built on the economic backs of NYU's faculty, students and workers. NYU seeks accommodations and zoning changes from the City, yet NYU is not a good citizen of the community. It denies the right of its workers to unionize and doesn't keep its promises to its neighbors. Borough President Stringer should vote no on the NYU 2031 plan," said Scott M. Sommer, UAW Region 9A New York Area Subregional Director."

"The buildings where NYU is proposing to insert massive structures possess a deliberate, conscious design and respect for much-needed open space, which allows them to exist in peace with their historic low-rise neighbors. This plan destroys that fragile balance and proposes to bury the garden of Greenwich Village under mountains of glass, stone and steel. New York City's historic neighborhoods cannot be regarded as a cleared field for an institution's expansionist dreams. This plan should be rejected," said Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director of the Historic Districts Council (NYC-wide preservation advocacy organization).

"It seems that NYU's administration is quite willing to sacrifice the current generation of faculty and families and the quality of life and community we enjoy to build something bigger and grander that may well bankrupt the university, and for which they have garnered virtually no faculty support. This 2031 plan is entirely generated from the top, and has involved virtually no sustained discussion with the faculty. We represent hundreds of NYU faculty members and their families living at the center of NYU's planned 20 year construction project. We join with our neighbors and fellow community members to oppose this irresponsible, bloated and irrational boondoggle and call on BP Stringer to issue a resounding rejection of the plan," said Brett Gary, Associate NYU Professor and Silver Towers Tenants Association (NYU Faculty Housing) Executive Committee member.

"NYU faculty don't want the Sexton Plan, or any part of it. We know that it will trash the neighborhood, ruin people's health, and ravage the environment. As NYU faculty we also know that this project is a huge financial risk, and it will surely trash our academic standing, turning NYU into a fifth-rate university.

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We cannot let that happen, and neither should Scott Stringer. We call on him to help us stop the Sexton Plan by voting ‘no’ *without conditions*,” said, Mark Crispin Miller, NYU Professor of Media Studies and founder, NYU Faculty Against the Sexton Plan.

“Save Chelsea joins Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in urging the Manhattan Borough Stringer to hold a public hearing and vote NO to NYU’s outrageous expansion proposal, which would set dangerous precedents, and surely rip the heart out of a historic and irreplaceable neighborhood. Chelsea faces similar dangers and like the Village knows that neighborhood zoning protections are vital to the preservation of our open space and our community’s character, and must not be stripped for the convenience of developers or large institutions,” said Lesley Doyal, Co-President of Save Chelsea, and NYU alumna.

“This NYU scheme will not only affect Greenwich Village, it will have a tremendously deleterious impact on SoHo as well. The millions of square footage that NYU wants to build near Houston Street, the gateway to SoHo, will cause our neighborhood to be transformed from a residential, shopping and creative community to a mere extension of NYU’s campus,” said Beat Keerl on behalf of the SoHo Alliance.

“The Chelsea Council of Block Associations (CCBA) supports our neighbors to our south in their efforts to get Borough President Stringer to hold a public hearing regarding NYU’s development plans and to listen to the overwhelming opposition and also oppose NYU’s plan. The plan is overdevelopment and it is inappropriate, out of context for the neighborhood, takes away good public space and is not wanted by the community,” said CCBA member Corey Johnson on behalf of CCBA President William Borock.

“NYU’s presence is not being disputed. Its insistence on taking over the Village is. The massive zoning changes they are demanding would be horrendous for the community. This alone requires an emphatic no vote - a thousand times no to the entire expansion plan,” said Edith Charlton, Chair of the Union Square Community Coalition.

“The residents of Washington Square Village vehemently and unanimously oppose NYU’s proposed expansion plan which will destroy our neighborhood -- the children’s Key Park, the world-renowned Sasaki Garden, the garage, dog run, LaGuardia Park and Mercer Playground, all of which will be replaced with a construction site for the next 20 years. We call on Borough President Scott Stringer to vote NO on NYU’s Plan 2031 in its entirety. Its size and scope is a disaster for Greenwich Village -- NYU has other options and we have none!,” said Anne Hearn, Co-President of the Washington Square Village Tenants Association (NYU Faculty and Tenants Housing).

“Residents below Houston Street are already crowded and displaced by NYU’s expansion, in student and faculty housing. We rely on the open space NYU wants to build upon as a place to decompress, to walk, to run, and to enjoy,” said Georgette Fleischer, Founder, Friends of Petrosino Square (Little Italy).

Today’s press conference was sponsored by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Downtown Independent Democrats, Silver Towers Tenants Association (NYU faculty housing), the SoHo

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Alliance, UAW Region 9A and GSOC/UAW Local 2110 (NYU Graduate Workers), the Union Square Community Coalition, NYU Faculty Against the Sexton Plan (NYU-FASP), Friends of NoHo, the Chelsea Council of Block Associations, Save Chelsea, 15 Washington Place Tenants Committee (NYU tenants), LaGuardia Corner Gardens, Charlton Street Block Association, West 13th Street 100 Block Association, 10th and Stuyvesant Block Association, Washington Place Block Association, Friends of Petrosino Square (Little Italy), Washington Square Village Tenants Association (NYU faculty and tenants), Mercer Square Block Association, Save Washington Square Village Sasaki Garden Committee.

For more information, see www.gvshp.org/nyu.

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