Chair Amanda Burden
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

April 24, 2012

Dear Chair and Commissioner,

I write to you to provide my perspective as the dean of one of NYU's undergraduate programs as you review the University's plan to address our need for additional space close to our historic home on Washington Square.

Liberal Studies enrolls 2300 students in our two undergraduate programs: the two-year foundation Core Curriculum, whose students complete their degrees in other NYU schools; and Global Liberal Studies, a new, innovative bachelor of arts degree course that offers a humanistic perspective on global studies. The Liberal Studies community includes approximately 80 full-time faculty, 50 adjunct faculty, and 25 full-time staff.

The program is now housed on the sixth floor of an office building at 726 Broadway, and it may be relevant to sketch our space trajectory in recent years. Until 2004, the program was housed in about 2,500 square feet of space "borrowed" from another NYU school; in that year, we moved to 726, and decompressed into about 10,000 square feet of usable space. But in our new space, our faculty still were forced to triple up in offices, while we literally had to convert closets to offices, and ultimately we were unable to add faculty for lack of accommodation for them. Last summer, when another unit in 726 moved into newly renovated space further from the Square, we added another 10,000 square feet, and decompressed another time.

Why should our narrative matter to New York City? As our program has grown and matured, we have moved from staffing our courses with adjunct faculty to employing full-time faculty. In eight years, our full-time numbers have grown from 40 to 80, adding 40 well-paid academic professionals who live in New York, pay taxes, pay rent, buy goods and services, and contribute actively to the cultural life of the city. Our full-time staff has doubled as well, from 13 to 25.

I also believe that our undergraduate programs, by the nature of our curriculum and distinctive pedagogical approach, contribute to the city in unique ways. We do not merely encourage, we require our faculty to bring the city into the classroom and to take their classes out into the city. We regard New York as a learning laboratory and our students are always engaged fully in using it. Classes are held in museums and cultural institutions all over the city, including the Cloisters, the Met, MOMA, the Natural History Museum, and many more. Our students attend lectures, concerts, the opera, theatre performances, and film showings. This provides direct as well as
indirect economic benefit to those institutions. And I might add that our students intern at the United Nations, the French Consulate, the Met, Morgan Stanley, MTV, Vogue, CNN, and so on, and through that service contribute directly to the city's economy as well.

This is a good story for Liberal Studies, for NYU, and for New York City. However, for us in Liberal Studies, it is not over. Our academic plan is to continue to rely less on adjunct faculty and to create more full-time faculty positions - 20 more without increasing our enrollment. This is an important investment for the University and for the city, but it will not happen if we cannot add additional space. Our present offices can accommodate only half that growth at most, and very little of the staff we need to add, too. We also need classrooms, a science lab, and a lecture theatre.

I realize that Liberal Studies and our space needs are but a small part of the overall plan, but I believe our small part is typical of the many individual program needs assembled in the University plan.

Sincerely,

Fred Schwarzbach
Dean, Liberal Studies