Chair Burden and Fellow Planning Commissioners, Good Morning. I have had the pleasure of serving as the Dean of the Tisch School of the Arts for almost 21 years, and have had the honor to serve not only the University, but the City of New York, the State of New York as a steward and advocate of art and culture.

The Tisch School exists because Greenwich Village is what it is. Our school was born at NYU over 45 years ago as a product of the risk taking and innovation that characterize the artists and cultural institutions in the Village. Our curriculum has been shaped by collaborations with theaters in the community. We draw on the talents of individual artists who live and work in the Village. The audience for much of the work of our students comes from the local community.

In recent years, creative entrepreneurs who graduated from our graduate and undergraduate divisions have often chosen the village as the venue in which to set up shop, contributing to the local creative economy. Tisch alums lead some of great downtown cultural institutions like the Public Theater and New York Theater Workshop. In fact, whole industries--independent filmmaking, Silicon Alley-- were movements fueled by the creative talent from Tisch.

In New York City at large, at this very moment, there are 300 Tisch alums in New York acting on stages, from Broadway to off- off Broadway which does not count the directors, set, costume and lighting designers. Nor does it take into account the number of Tisch alums who work in a burgeoning film and television industry in the city. Every year, the school becomes a more powerful magnet for drawing talent from all over the world to New York City to fuel, the stages, sound stages and creative businesses that help give this city its life and energy.

We have achieved at the highest level and contributed to the Creative economy of downtown New York, in spite of the fact that Tisch’s Institute for Performing Arts has for years struggled with inadequate, obsolete, sometimes dangerous and cramped facilities. Those facilities are at a crisis point. In order to continue to make contributions to the Village, New York City and the creative landscape of world culture, we have embarked on an ambitious plan to design the world’s finest performing arts training center

We launched a master plan effort in 2007 to explore the best possible solution to meeting this critical need for new performing arts space. Working with the world renowned firm Annead (formerly Polshek), we explored a number of options for the Institute of Performing Arts
The promise of the superblocks, which allows us to build—de novo—is the most appropriate space for a new Performing Arts Center. Specifically, the Zipper building is the best site for the type of specialized space we require: high ceilings; column free space; space to accommodate a fly loft theater (we have none anywhere else at NYU); easy ground floor access to the public for theatrical productions. Without facilities like these, we cease being competitive with other theater and performing arts training centers around the country.

The project will create a first rate site of theatrical training and make it possible to carry out a curriculum that simulates the complexities of professional protocols, practices and technical requirements.

The new IPA will include studio, rehearsal spaces, practice rooms, theatrical production shops, workshop spaces for a range of disciplines.

We believe that part of the character of the Village is the support of individual artists and its cultural life. The new Institute of Performing Arts allows us to continue that tradition.