Testimony of
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New York Building Congress
Manhattan Community Board 2
Public Hearing on
New York University
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As the City’s largest and most diverse coalition of the design, construction and real estate industry, the New York Building Congress is committed to promoting well-planned development that improves the City’s economic health and quality of life. We are pleased to offer our support today for New York University’s ambitious and important NYU 2031 expansion plan.

The Building Congress has supported the expansion plans of Columbia and Fordham Universities, and the City University of New York, allowing them to modernize and grow to meet the needs of 21st century higher education.

NYU has the same need to expand. As an urban campus, NYU is perennially challenged by space constraints. To remain competitive with the nation’s leading universities, NYU must provide facilities that attract the best and brightest minds and facilitate learning. NYU has identified locations close to its Washington Square home, as well as in downtown Brooklyn and Governors Island, where it plans to build enough space to accomplish these goals.

NYU’s proposed expansion is a critical response to changes in the City’s economy and the world’s economy. State and local government and civic leaders have led important efforts to move the City away from a reliance on the financial sector to more diverse, knowledge-based industries such as medicine, technology, higher education and the arts.

NYU and its sister universities are incubators for much of the talent that ends up entering and then leading these industries. Our universities are therefore critical links in the cycle of education, innovation and economic development.
In fact, NYU is already a major contributor to the City’s economy, employing more than 16,000 faculty members, administrators and staff, and generating hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic activity.

The scale of NYU’s proposal has provoked some concern about how it will impact the Greenwich Village neighborhood. NYU has looked carefully at creating satellite campuses that will place much of the proposed square footage in other parts of the City. In the meantime, the proposal would modernize its existing Washington Square buildings and develop much of the new square footage on properties it already owns. Therefore, the actual “footprint” of NYU will not grow in a way that overwhelms the historic neighborhood.

The City has taken important steps to attract investment and retain a highly-mobile, well-educated workforce. It has made critical investments in its schools, parks and transit infrastructure, and rezoned key areas of the City to permit growth and investment in the City’s multiple business districts.

New York City’s leaders must take the next step by ensuring the City remains an inviting home to the investors and professionals who will drive the industries of the future. An expanded, diversified, modern New York University is a key to this vision.

The Building Congress urges the Community Board to approve NYU’s planned expansion.