181 Mercer
New York University

181 Mercer offers NYU a unique opportunity to advance itself academically while engaging internal and external communities, fostering connections among the building’s diverse users, and showcasing the University’s commitment to sustainability and elegant, flexible design.

ADVANCING ACADEMIC AMBITIONS
When complete, 181 Mercer will be NYU’s largest classroom building and will meet a pressing need for general purpose classrooms and specialized educational spaces for performing arts students. With spaces for teaching, learning, performing, rehearsing, studying, and collaboration, along with a new gym and student and faculty housing, 181 Mercer will be a new gateway between the city and the University. Its inclusive programming and open design will also bring together diverse groups of faculty, students, and community members in a single building that embodies the creativity and energy that defines both the University and New York City.

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS
181 Mercer is a 735,000-square-foot, multipurpose structure designed to house classrooms, informal study spaces, performing arts theaters, rehearsal and practice rooms, varsity sports arenas, a recreational sports gymnasium, and cafés, as well as faculty and first-year student housing. Each of these different spaces will be organized into unique “neighborhoods” whose specific users will add to the vibrancy and diversity of the building.

To keep the building open and accessible, each of these neighborhoods will be connected to the Commons, 181 Mercer’s internal second floor space that serves as the heart of student activity and provides the NYU community with open and expansive collaborative study, meeting, and gathering places. To take advantage of the building’s 360-degree relationship with the surrounding neighborhood, traditional organizational patterns have been rejected in favor of a design that places instructional spaces towards the center of the building, while circulation between the neighborhoods and the Commons will wrap along the building’s transparent perimeter. This will simultaneously provide students and faculty with city views while also giving outside observers a sense of the building’s activity. This circulation, along with prominent and welcoming stairways, adds to the building’s sense of openness and connection by encouraging not only movement but also the casual encounters and intellectual exchanges between different student and faculty groups that are at the center of the college experience.

ENGAGING COMMUNITY
181 Mercer will serve as a hub for NYU students and faculty, but it will also engage Greenwich Village, SoHo, and the larger New York City community. The building’s open and inviting northern entrance at Mercer, Greene, and Bleecker Streets flows into a large and welcoming public lobby that spans the entire width of the building. By activating this space with chairs and small tables, 181 Mercer hopes to create a neighborhood amenity that further connects the community and the University. In addition to this space, 181 Mercer will reestablish Greene Street north of Houston Street along the building’s west side to provide a new, landscaped pedestrian walkway.

181 Mercer’s height and massing are inspired by its surrounding neighborhood, while its elegant and transparent façade reinforces the sense of openness found within the building’s interior. This transparent façade puts the building’s movements, colors, textures, and art on display, allowing observers to witness the dynamism and vitality of NYU. Conversely, students within the building will have the city’s vibrancy and constant movement as a backdrop to their own learning experience. These visual connections create the sense that the building and NYU are both in and of the city.
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Interwoven among its transparent façade are subtly angled glass panels, or wedge panels, that extend across the building. Architecturally, the wedge panels help distinguish 181 Mercer within a unique cityscape by creating a distinct and textured façade that changes depending on where observers are standing. Environmentally, these panels are responsive in that their shape and placement have been tailored to the building’s unique sun exposure. Consequently, each wedge panel reduces glare while allowing for an abundance of natural light. As an added benefit, the wedge panels also create a series of window benches in the building’s upper levels and housing towers that frame the distinctive New York City views.

EMPHASIZING SUSTAINABILITY
Designed in support of the NYU Climate Action Plan, 181 Mercer is committed to environmental responsibility and the building takes advantage of sustainable design strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, and the amount of waste generated during both construction and the building’s everyday use. As part of these initiatives, the building will be connected to NYU’s existing Co-Generation (CoGen) facility, a highly efficient, natural gas-fueled power plant that simultaneously produces electricity, heat, and chilled water. In addition to reducing the amount of these resources used, the CoGen plant will also substantially reduce the building’s greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants compared to conventional sources. Moreover, 181 Mercer’s plans call for the use of specially selected, low-impact materials that do not contain harmful contaminants that could have a negative impact on indoor air quality.

In addition to using cleaner energy, the building’s design itself minimizes its carbon footprint. The transparent façade and wedge panels, for example, reduce energy requirements by allowing the building to rely primarily on natural light during the day. Similarly, 181 Mercer’s series of green roofs and outdoor terraces naturally cool the building and its surrounding landscape and, with the assistance of a retention tank, help to manage rainwater runoff. In addition to creating valuable outdoor green space that will serve as a kind of elevated campus quad, these roofs and terraces will be an attractive amenity for the NYU community and the building’s neighbors who will be able to view the landscape from above. The building is targeted to achieve LEED v4 Gold certification.

ADAPTING TO THE FUTURE
By bringing together an exceptionally diverse mix of educational and cultural spaces into a single building designed to encourage University connections and community engagement, 181 Mercer not only builds a multidisciplinary NYU community that reflects the University’s academic diversity, but also gives the University the flexibility and adaptability to meet ever-changing future needs. By creating flexible, creative spaces that are strongly rooted into the vibrant city that surrounds them, 181 Mercer will amplify NYU’s academic mission within the city and the neighborhood.