A University as Great as Its City: NYU’s Strategy for Future Growth
Dear Friends and Fellow New Yorkers,

In many ways, New York University has been different from day one: enlarging the scope of higher education to meet the needs of the emerging middle class, embracing the urban energy instead of cloistering itself, valuing hard work and merit over contentment and connection, and focusing on the future rather than fixating on the past. In these traits, NYU mirrors the great city in which it makes its home, enabling both the University and New York City to draw in people of talent, innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. And just as these qualities have proven vital for New York City’s prosperity, so, too, have they been indispensable for NYU’s advancement, leading the well-known educational scholar David Kirp to name NYU’s recent achievements “the success story in contemporary American higher education.”

In the world of higher education, unlike other sectors, it is rare for an institution’s reputation to move in such noticeable ways; yet in the space of a generation, NYU has succeeded in transforming itself from a good regional university into a major national research university that attracts top scholars to our faculty ranks and draws students from all 50 states and more than 130 countries. The University’s transformation cannot be attributed to privilege, prestige, and the comfort of a pastoral setting, but to hard work and bold—at times, even risky—decisions.

Still, in other ways, NYU is very much like its peer universities.

Knowledge is an enterprise of accumulation. Each discovery is a brick added to a foundation that stretches far back in human history. To be sure, there is significant refinement—some ideas are discarded, and some disciplines lose their prominence while others charge forward—but fundamentally each answered question leads to new questions demanding their own answers.

The physical space that universities occupy does not expand in direct proportion to the growth of knowledge and ideas—we are selective about what we pursue and keep, and new media enable us to compress our troves of knowledge. But particularly with the dramatically increased access to higher education, new pedagogy that emphasizes smaller class settings, and the rapid expansion of scientific research that began in the 20th century, growth in service of academic excellence has been an imperative for the modern research university.

As NYU looks forward to its 200th anniversary in 2031, the University is at another pivotal moment in its history. It is committed to sustaining the momentum that has so changed and improved the University. To that end, the University crafted an overall strategic road map called Framework 2031 (see appendix, page 269) that takes stock of NYU’s progress, points to areas for future investments, and lays out a vision of NYU as a global network university with a new four-year liberal arts and sciences college with engineering in Abu Dhabi, other international sites for research and education, and its anchor location at Washington Square.

Indispensable to realizing the overall vision of Framework 2031—and advancing as a preeminent academic institution—is having sufficient physical space to build laboratories and research spaces for faculty, conduct classes for students, and house all those who will answer the call to come to New York City and make contributions to it. Having been extremely economical with space—NYU has approximately half the square footage per student of Columbia University and one-quarter of Harvard’s—the University has reached a tipping point. Space is required to create a vibrant intellectual community in all senses of the phrase, with teachers and learners in proximity to each other, ready and willing to engage with other thinkers and doers throughout the city.

Great cities need great universities. For centuries, universities have been our principal engines for creating knowledge and for presenting ideas that shape and enliven human understanding, propel our prosperity, and spark our creativity. NYU believes its promise and that of New York City’s are intertwined, that their headway will be joint and interdependent.

Though it is imperative for NYU to move forward, it is also vital to do so in a way that recognizes the University is part of a special, storied neighborhood to which we owe an obligation of care. In the past, NYU has not always honored that obligation; but today, we know that our responsibilities extend to overseeing and maintaining NYU’s existing property, to encompassing an innovative and sustainable approach toward creating additional space in the Washington Square area, and to taking advantage of locations outside of Greenwich Village to accommodate a significant portion of our growth.

NYU 2031 aims to be a thoughtful, comprehensive, citywide approach for thinking about how to grow in a way that both keeps the University moving forward academically yet respects the communities and the city in which we make our home.

I hope you enjoy reading about our plans and thinking about our ideas, and I look forward to our continuing dialogue about them.

Sincerely,

John Sexton
President, New York University
“It’s very hard to differentiate where New York University stops and New York City starts. That is one of the real keys to NYU—the city goes right through it. NYU benefits from the city, and the city benefits from NYU.

“And if you took NYU—the same faculty, the same students—and put them someplace else, this city would be immeasurably poorer, but so would NYU. One of the reasons people pick NYU is because if you are a student there, you are a citizen here.”

—Mayor Michael Bloomberg

(From the documentary New York University: In and of the City)
1. A University Looks to Its Future
What will NYU look like in another generation?
In 2031, New York University will mark its 200th anniversary. To provide the academic infrastructure necessary for the University to fulfill its mission in that milestone year, and to coincide with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s bold planning efforts for the city, the University has—for the first time in its history—developed a long-term strategy, NYU 2031, to guide its future growth.

This document strives to outline what NYU will look like in 2031. It has many details but only a few driving premises: The University will move forward by building on its strengths. It will meet the future by honoring its history. It will continue to reflect the values of the city with which it is intrinsically linked. It will be bold in its ambitions to ensure that New York City remains a vibrant, innovative, leading capital of the world, but sensitive and sensible in its planning.
key educational institutions, the University is a crucial player in the city’s evolution, a driving force in the generation of a knowledge-based economy. It is a principal incubator that attracts and retains the creative capital that supports all of the city’s important economic sectors. It produces the ideas and attracts the people who both perform and consume in a knowledge-based economy. It offers the activities that characterize the new international idea capital.

Every year NYU draws new talent to the city—energetic people who come from around the country and the world. NYU trains the artists who help make New York City a cultural mecca, the teachers who educate the next generation, and the researchers who attract millions of dollars to the city every year. NYU supplies the hundreds of physicians, nurses, dentists, therapists, and social workers who help keep the community well by providing thousands of hours of free or low-cost health care and advice.

To determine what NYU will be in 2031 is first to embrace what New York City must be.

New York University would not exist without New York City. The University’s story is intertwined with the city’s story from the beginning. Its identity and community are inextricably bound to its home in Greenwich Village. Its successes mirror the city’s successes; its struggles, the city’s struggles.

Securing New York City as one of the preeminent intellectual and cultural capitals of the world will be key to the city’s future. By the middle of this new century, a small set of worldwide “idea capitals” will likely have emerged. These cities will be the world’s leading centers for intellectual, cultural, educational, and scientific activity. They will be the great engines for creativity, entrepreneurship, and economic activity, the capitals of a comprehensive and global knowledge-based enterprise and they will be marked by the presence of great universities.

New York City is poised for that future. From its earliest days as a gateway economy, it has continually adapted and evolved. When agrarian economies gave way to manufacturing, the city led the way. When industry diminished, the city turned to more modern forms of commerce. As jobs in finance declined—down 9 percent from 1990 to 2005—other economic sectors flourished. During the same period, employment in the so-called creative economy—the intellectual, cultural, and educational sectors—rose 17 percent.

New York City is reinventing itself once again. If it is to move beyond financial crises and remain a world capital into the next century, the city and its great institutions must lead the way in this transition.

How does New York University fit into the picture? NYU is more than a major employer and public citizen in New York City. Along with other...
What is NYU?

Urban

NYU is a reflection of the city it inhabits. It is what New York City is: energy, ambition, diversity, vibrancy, history, and change. It is a place of tradition and creation, a force for social mobility, and a source of pride and hope. It is a proving ground and an innovator.

International

NYU is, like New York City, highly connected to the world. It is a hub for a growing global network. It is a place of many people and diverse cultures. It is an economic, cultural, academic, and artistic incubator of ideas that reach around the globe.

Progressive

NYU is, like higher education in general, a force for human advancement. It is a vehicle for solving social and economic problems, improving lives, and advancing science, art, and health care. It is the pursuit of knowledge, a sanctuary for artistic creation and dissent, a forum for people emboldened and encouraged to enhance the character of our civilization.

Unique

NYU is a major research university with no campus. It overturns traditional notions of a university and perforates boundaries between diverse local and global communities. It thrives in a vibrant, energetic, and often chaotic urban context. It coexists with its neighbors on public streets and spaces in one of the busiest, most dense cities in the world.
Student Spending

As detailed in the Chronicle of Higher Education, discretionary undergraduate student spending per month ranges from $600 to $1,100 per student. Assuming an average of $750, NYU undergraduates spend $14.9 million each month.¹

¹ This is total discretionary spending. There is no data available on the amount spent in the local community.

University Spending

During FY 2009, NYU spent (as recorded by Purchasing Services) a total of $776,015,795.

City, State, and Federal Government Revenues

Each year, 65 percent of graduating students remain and work in New York City.

Construction

From 2000 to 2009, NYU spent $1.9 billion on more than 1,600 capital projects. These projects included the following:

- Standard Construction
- Capital Maintenance
- ITS Projects
### A Private University in the Public Service

*Designated in 2006 by the Carnegie Foundation as an institution that is “community engaged,” the University—students, faculty, and staff—is integrated into the social fabric of New York City and volunteers hundreds of thousands of hours to countless social service agencies.*

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<th>The NYU Community Fund donates on average <strong>$125,000</strong> annually to more than <strong>70</strong> needy organizations in lower Manhattan.</th>
<th>Social work students spend more than a <strong>half-million</strong> hours each year conducting fieldwork in New York City's public agencies and hospitals.</th>
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<td>More than <strong>15,000</strong> students volunteer or intern in community-based organizations each year. NYU student volunteers and interns are spread throughout more than <strong>1,200</strong> New York City nonprofit organizations annually. In 2008-2009, the <strong>1.4 million hours</strong> of student-provided service was equal to <strong>700 people</strong> engaged <strong>full time</strong> in serving the community.</td>
<td>NYU’s College of Dentistry provides over <strong>$30 million</strong> in uncompensated care each year; its clinics provide more than <strong>300,000</strong> patient visits per year, and its mobile dental van provides full on-site care at schools and community centers throughout the city.</td>
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<td>NYU runs the nation’s largest America Reads/America Counts program, annually placing <strong>900</strong> students as tutors in more than <strong>100</strong> New York City public elementary schools. NYU is involved in more than <strong>400</strong> New York City public schools each year. NYU’s health training and service programs greatly expand the capacity of health care provided across the city and often are targeted to high-needs populations that do not have health coverage.</td>
<td>Nursing students spend tens of <strong>thousands</strong> of hours to improve the health and health care delivery for citizens across the city and state. The College of Nursing recently purchased a <strong>35’ mobile outreach bus</strong>. The nurse-managed facility has two onboard exam rooms and provides school-based primary health care services in Brooklyn, with an emphasis on immigrant children. In the past year alone, there were <strong>500</strong> “in-bus” health care visits.</td>
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To achieve its goal of remaining an intellectually rigorous, world-class university, NYU faces steep challenges.

The University confronts a critical shortage of space. High property values and an endowment much lower than its peer institutions frame the problem; urban density adds to the issue.

The University’s core location in historic Greenwich Village presents stringent preservation and zoning restrictions. Perhaps even more daunting is the preservation of the intangibles—the rich artistic, intellectual, and cultural attributes that define the Village. NYU students and faculty, throughout much of the Village’s history, have helped to create and foster these intangibles as well as benefited from them.

Additionally, city leaders predict that New York City’s population will grow by 15 percent—or one million people—over the next 20 years. The need for space will outstrip availability, and real estate, despite their cyclical nature, will continue to be expensive in New York City; at NYU, this means that academic aspirations and capabilities will be checked by limited capacity.

NYU projects only modest increases in future student enrollment at Washington Square, at a half percent per year—or about 1,000 additional undergraduates by 2031. But the University still needs to contend with the last 20 years of growth, which has left it starved for space. It has a growing faculty, increased demand for student services and housing, and unmet needs for academic spaces—from faculty offices, classrooms, and laboratories to studio, practice, and performance spaces.
NYU 2031 aims to reflect the University’s values in its physical presence.

How does NYU respond to academic opportunities that call for more space and do so in a way that values its history, neighborhood, and community? How does it ensure its continued progress within a robust and livable urban community?

To honor its core values of intellectual freedom, openness, and social progress, NYU is making a commitment that its physical presence should mirror its institutional values, that its presence in its neighborhood should be as forward thinking as its academic mission.

This planning effort began several years ago in discussions with students, faculty, administrators, and neighbors and continued through a series of public open houses. Through its first attempt at transparent, predictable, and measured growth undertaken in dialogue with its community, NYU sets forth a vision that honors many voices and diverse opinions and respects its place in a special environment—home to activism, intellectualism, and some of urban planning’s greatest debates.

NYU 2031 is not a “master plan,” for the University does not have a large, contiguous campus over which it can exert control. Instead, NYU 2031 is a citywide strategy for how to provide the physical space needed for NYU’s long-range academic goals. Having long made its home in the heart of Greenwich Village, the University recognizes both the strengths and limitations—as well as the uniqueness—of its environment brings to planning. Thus, NYU begins with a new approach to process—one steeped in analysis and rigor and fully engaged with the University’s community and neighbors. It outlines a strategy for locating as much as six million square feet over a 25-year period—two-thirds for academic space and student services, and one-third for affordable housing for faculty as well as housing for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

In determining how best to distribute this space, NYU acknowledges the primacy of its core location at Washington Square—the heart of the University’s local and burgeoning global networks. It seeks to bolster this location through efficient utilization of NYU’s existing land and property, which includes making best use of the property it already owns. In this way, approximately two million square feet, a significant portion of it below ground, could be located at the Washington Square core.

In addition, NYU 2031 identifies the potential for accommodating space in the University’s neighborhoods, within a 10- to 20-minute walk of NYU’s core. It also looks to enhance the University’s remote sites (academic hubs and locations beyond the neighborhood) such as the health corridor along First Avenue between 23rd and 34th streets (where the NYU Langone Medical Center and College of Dentistry have had a long, established presence) and the Polytechnic Institute of NYU in downtown Brooklyn (whose recent affiliation and planned merger with NYU returns an engineering curriculum to the University for the first time since the closing of its University Heights campus in the Bronx in 1973). Additionally, NYU 2031 envisions a University presence on Governors Island. For each location, the strategy is to lay out an urban design approach that embraces the distinct and varied neighborhoods that make up New York City, and it establishes guidelines for the areas surrounding the University’s core, neighborhood, and remote sites, ensuring that they will be approached with sensitivity and appropriateness of use, scale, and character.

Throughout the implementation of this vision, NYU will take a leadership role in promoting sustainability and public service, vowing to proceed with openness, transparency, dialogue, and reflection. The University commits itself to development that respects the context and character of each location and strives for architecture and design of high quality.

In short, NYU 2031 is an opportunity to devise what the University’s community and neighbors deserve: a progressive approach to urban design worthy of both the city’s past and its promise.