“We are poised in this century to reimagine new civic patterns that bring universities and cities together in their common quest for global readiness.”

—M. Perry Chapman

3. A New Approach for the 21st Century
The outstanding gains New York University has made in the past decades have given it the opportunity to be—and demanded that it must be—more reflective, measured, and strategic. Now the University is making its next bold move: to commit to a progressive new approach to its growth and urban planning.

The University has conducted studies and analyses; listened to community boards, civic leaders, and faculty, student, and neighborhood voices; and launched key environmental initiatives. These efforts form the foundation of its vision for the future—and help ensure that NYU plays its part in sustaining the environmental integrity and cultural assets of its neighborhoods.
NYU’s Global and Local Maps

NYU consists of 18 schools and colleges at five major centers in Manhattan.

In the next few years, it will complete a merger with the Polytechnic Institute of NYU (formerly Polytechnic University), creating a major new academic center in downtown Brooklyn. And in addition to the 10 academic centers that NYU currently operates on five continents, the University will open a full degree-granting portal campus in Abu Dhabi in the fall of 2010.
New Ways of Thinking

In 2001, the educational historian David Kirp wrote that New York University, “an institution that was nearly bankrupt in the mid-1970s, has become the success story in contemporary American higher education.” Kirp pointed to the impressive gains made by the University: the outstanding quality of faculty recruited, a dramatic increase in applications for admissions, a vastly improved academic profile of students, and a broad geographic diversity in student demographics.

Today, NYU consists of 18 schools and colleges at five major centers in Manhattan. Most recently, it has affiliated with the Polytechnic Institute of NYU in downtown Brooklyn (formerly Polytechnic University). It also operates 10 academic centers on five continents and a portal campus to open in Abu Dhabi in 2010. NYU has 6,900 faculty members, more than 42,000 students from every state and more than 130 countries, and more than 300,000 alumni living around the globe. It is a large, decentralized university doing important work throughout the world, just as it has long done throughout the city. Progress, however, does not have an end point, and success demands even greater achievement.

In 2002, when John Sexton became president of NYU, the University was at a low point in its relationship with its neighbors. As the New York Times wrote in April 2001, many people were unhappy with the size and scale of several residence halls and with two new buildings then under way on the south side of the Square: the Helen and Martin Kimmel Center for University Life and the School of Law’s Furman Hall. As dean of the School of Law, however, Sexton started a dialogue with community members and neighbors, and he agreed to compromise, altering the proposed building from 13 to 10 floors. The groundbreaking for Furman—only 17 days after the September 11 attack—was the city’s first major construction groundbreaking following the tragedy and NYU’s first new academic building in 50 years. Symbolically important, it underscored the University’s commitment to the future of the city. The new century had marked a turning point. The University, under the guidance of a new president, recommitted to its city and community. As it set forth bold new goals for academic excellence, NYU’s leadership determined that past methods for growth could no longer be sustained. And though in the next couple of years, a few projects (the East 14th Street residence hall, for example) would not yet reflect NYU’s commitment to change, the University knew it had to set aside its former ways of doing business and approach its future—both academically and physically—with a more strategic and long-term focus. NYU had to realize that it exists in a fragile ecosystem. President Sexton said: its future and the city’s future are one and the same.

As NYU contends with the legacy of past growth and plans for its future, it faces particular challenges. Along with the programmatic and personal needs of its faculty and students, it must balance the concerns of its community members, many of whom have watched the University’s past expansion with concern, if not alarm. The University must confront a severe space shortage and overcome its dependence on leased spaces, while at the same time dealing with the pressures and vagaries of the real estate market, a city population expected to grow by one million people in the next 20 years, and the unique requirements of its location among historic districts and neighborhoods zoned for manufacturing.

The confluence of all these factors puts a premium on long-term, strategic approaches to space planning. In the past, NYU relied on an incremental and opportunistic approach that at times led to results out of context with the very neighborhood whose intangible qualities—creative, progressive, intellectual—the University both fosters and needs. Today, NYU has set forth on a different path.

The First Step

The NYU of the 20th century had benefited from a spirit of entrepreneurialism and creative pragmatism that led to a set of opportunistic moves, many of which paid off handsomely. But at the start of the 21st century and under the leadership of John Sexton, NYU recognized that it needed a more reflective, long-term strategic approach if the University was to realize its academic ambitions.

Within that context, the deans of each school and college set about forging 10-year plans, which the University used to formulate a broad academic road map considering NYU’s progress to date and pointing to where the University will make investments going forward.

Preceding but emblematic of this type of academic strategic planning was the Partners’ Plan. Launched in 2004 and named after a small group of trustees who provided the funding, it sought the largest one-time expansion of NYU’s faculty in its history. It aimed to increase the faculty in Arts and Science, the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, and the Institute of Fine Arts by 125 positions, or about 20 percent. The hiring was designed to enhance current quality in such disciplines as economics, journalism, politics, and science, for example, and build the faculty by recruiting at the senior, middle, and junior levels.

To facilitate both recruitment and retention efforts and enlarge the University’s research capacity with a strong focus on the arts and sciences, the initiative has underwritten significant capital investments in academic facilities and housing improvements. It has

1 Framework 2031: This document, approved in 2001, establishes NYU’s future academic priorities and provides the foundation for space planning.
already funded renovations of more than 250,000 square feet, including space for the Departments of Biology, Economics, Politics, and Sociology; the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute; and the Creative Writing Program.

To assist in these efforts, NYU engaged Polshek Partnership Architects, a local firm with expertise integrating new design with historic buildings. Together, they sought opportunities to consolidate departments under single identifiable buildings and locate them in proximity to one another in order to foster collaboration. New facilities were created to provide adequate room for faculty research, student consultation, graduate students, meeting and seminar rooms, and administrative support. Each project incorporated ground-floor lecture halls and undergraduate lounge space, which allows the University to create a transparent public face while meeting its needs for teaching and gathering spaces for students. NYU also engaged the lab planners CCH2A to develop benchmarking standards for science research space, providing a foundation for the expansion of the biology, chemistry, physics, and psychology departments and the neural science and genomics and systems biology centers.

The next step was to extend the strategic approach employed in building the arts and sciences under the Partners’ Plan to a University-wide level and engage the University community in a discussion of what NYU had been, where it was, and where it wanted to go. That effort resulted in Framework 2031, a document that put forth a clear set of overarching principles and criteria to guide the choices and decisions the University would face over the coming decades. Ratified by the Board of Trustees in 2008, Framework 2031 is a road map for advancing NYU within the ranks of truly great research universities in the world.

Planning Preparation

In order to implement a large-scale planning process to meet academic aspirations, the University, in 2006, established an office that had never before existed at NYU—the Office of Strategic Assessment, Planning, and Design. Starting small, with one employee, it would soon include several in-house and consulting architects and urban planners to engage in short- and long-range planning, undertake historical studies and current space-use analysis, study peer institutions, and establish standards for design.

Before NYU could fully start thinking about its future, it needed to understand its past. One of the planners’ first initiatives was to undertake a study of University buildings in the Washington Square area. Conducted with funding from a Getty Foundation Campus Heritage grant, the project resulted in a preservation plan for which NYU won a Lucy B. Moses Preservation Award from the city’s Landmarks Conservancy.

The planners also visited peer institutions and charted NYU’s historical real estate growth to analyze moves. They continued to work with each of NYU’s schools and colleges to understand how academic plans translated into physical needs, completing master plans for Tisch School of the Arts, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development; School of Continuing and Professional Studies; and the NYU Division of Libraries. Additionally, the planners launched a study to prepare to consolidate administrative units and student services outside the University’s Washington Square location, freeing space for future academic programs. This resulted in a 20 percent reduction in space use by sharing resources and creating greater density.

In February 2007, the University issued a Request for Proposals to more than 50 internationally acclaimed architecture and urban planning firms. From among 14 proposals and three finalists, NYU selected SMWM to lead the design team; with experience working with universities in dense urban settings, the San Francisco–based company is known for its expertise in architecture, planning, urban design, and community outreach. The team also included the multinational firm Grimshaw Architects and an internationally renowned architect and planner as consultants.

As part of this initiative, in 2006 NYU hired Michael Ward to create the Molecular Design Institute. Housed in the Department of Chemistry but drawing on the disciplines of physics and biology as well, the Institute pursues research in supramolecular (or “above the molecule”) materials chemistry, a field where molecular building blocks are manipulated for applications ranging from energy-efficient lighting to drug delivery.

In 2004, the Institute received a $7.2 million, six-year grant from the National Science Foundation to create a Materials Science Research and Engineering Center, where scientists will develop new materials through the exploration and manipulation of molecular particles. The Center will operate a program to cultivate junior faculty and bolster emerging areas of interdisciplinary research, and it will also create a program for K-12 and postsecondary education activities to introduce scientific topics to students in New York City schools.

Before it could start thinking about its future, NYU needed to better understand its past. One of the planners’ first initiatives was to undertake a study of University buildings around Washington Square and a Getty Foundation Campus Heritage grant, the project resulted in a preservation plan for which NYU won a Lucy B. Moses Preservation Award from the city’s Landmarks Conservancy.
New York City-based Toshiko Mori Architect. They brought visionary architectural and sustainable design experience, in particular, Grimshaw’s environmental responsiveness and rigorous approach to detailing and Mori’s reputation for reframing historic context by regenerating modernist buildings with innovative interventions.

**Sustaining the Environment**

In the fall of 2006, NYU launched a University-wide sustainability initiative. As part of this undertaking, NYU made the largest-ever purchase of renewable energy by a U.S. college or university and New York City institution: 118,000,000 kilowatt-hours of wind-generated electricity, which equaled the removal of 12,000 cars from the road or the planting of 11 million trees. The purchase—one of the largest ever made in the nation—was renewed in 2008.

Around the same time, the University signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment to develop a plan for net carbon neutrality, hired a full-time sustainability staff, and established an Environmental Studies academic program. It also became one of the first universities to join New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s call for a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2017.

NYU had long practiced sustainable methods. In 1996, it established one of the first formal institutional recycling programs in the city (as of 2006, NYU was recycling at least 30 percent of its waste stream), and in the 1960s, the University made a commitment to clean energy by building a cogeneration plant beneath Warren Weaver Hall. Cogeneration—the simultaneous production of electricity and useful thermal energy—is much more efficient than conventional energy generation, producing lower emissions of carbon dioxide, regulated pollutants, and particulate matter. In 2006, the plant was supplying enough energy to remove seven University buildings from the city electrical grid, but approaching the three-decade mark, it needed to be retired or overhauled.

NYU decided to make a $120 million investment to build a larger, cleaner, and more efficient plant. Scheduled for completion in April 2010, the new facility will power up to 30 University buildings. While doubling its overall power capacity, it will nevertheless emit at least 19 percent less carbon dioxide, 70 percent less nitrogen oxide, 83 percent less sulfur dioxide, and 78 percent less particulate matter than the previous plant. Above the site, NYU will create a new public green space.

In the academic realm, the establishment of a University-wide program in Environmental Studies, which joins work already under way in many NYU schools, colleges, and departments, ensures that NYU’s academic community will be a driving force for University and city sustainability and creates numerous rich opportunities for faculty research and projects to intersect with University operations. And realizing that students have been at the forefront of environmental efforts, the NYU Sustainability Task Force offers funding for a number of green grants (in 2007-8, for example, more than $160,000 was awarded to 23 student-, faculty-, and staff-led projects). One recently funded project is a student-organized bike share program, which provides free bicycles for use by the University community and is modeled after the Vélib program in Paris.

The efforts of the Sustainability Task Force have been wide-reaching, encompassing dining services, purchasing, student activities, landscaping, and transportation. NYU gardens, for example, have phased out synthetic chemical fertilizers and pesticides while installing efficient drip irrigation and increasing the use of native plantings. The University has completed its first LEED-certified building, dining halls as well as catering programs have increased local and organic food options and replaced containers and utensils with those made of biodegradable materials; and in perhaps the largest program of its kind in New York City, NYU is composting organic waste. In September 2008, 34 tons of material were taken from seven buildings and 12 dining areas to an organic farm upstate. While NYU
2007

A New York Times article by Karen Arenson detailed NYU’s efforts to involve its neighbors in the planning process. It covered a June open house reception: “For five hours, about 300 people, mostly local residents . . . examined poster boards describing NYU and its needs, and chatted with university officials and their architects about where the university was headed.” The reception was part of a planning process that the university says would shape growth more deliberately, give the community more say — and, shapes, make the expansion more palatable.

“Let’s hope to see if people can come up with creative ways to help the university and the community,” said John E. Sexton, NYU’s president. “It should be a win-win situation, a new university and a new neighborhood.” The university has been working last year with a task force of community leaders and elected officials. Led by the borough president, Scott M. Stringer, in April, it held a round of architecture and design forums to create a strategic plan that includes community space. And on Thursday, April 26, the university will hold the first of three forums, to discuss NYU’s needs and to hear their voices. At a symbol of the new openness, the heavy stone doors of Sterling Memorial Hall, the city’s highest-honored venue on Washington Square Park, where the reception was held, will be opened for the first time in a decade, providing access directly from the street. But a signpost had to be constructed.

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NYU 2031

A New Approach for the 21st Century

2007-8

The University presented plans in progress over five open houses between June 2007 and April 2008, each attracting hundreds of people from the NYU community and its neighborhood. Through vigorous discussions and debates in person, as well as written comments from participants, NYU incorporated responses into the following rounds of planning. Those suggestions and concerns profoundly shaped the vision NYU presents in these pages.

A City and Its University

Face the Future

The future of the city and New York University are one and the same. Just as New York City’s long-term plan realizes that one of the city’s prime strategic advantages is found in its intellectual, cultural, and educational strengths, NYU knows that its energy, innovation, and vibrancy mirror its city’s. Now, through a planning process unprecedented in its history, NYU sets out to help sustain its city just as it has long helped sustain its city’s intellectual, economic, and artistic life. NYU will approach its future in a way that protects its neighbors and city, that engages its communities and acknowledges their concerns, and that reflects its humane and progressive values.

The University has committed to continue bringing community voices—to both University constituents and neighbors—into the process every step of the way. Going forward, the University will maintain a process of transparency and openness. It will continue to solicit and incorporate internal and external community input as fully as possible, consistent with its mission and resources. It will proceed by sharing information and by being clear about its decision-making processes and rationales. While not everyone may agree with the University’s choices, people should be clear as to why it is making the decisions it does.

NYU aims for results created by lively and committed neighborhood partnerships that draw on and reflect the academic expertise and progressive social goals of a world-class university. It has a bold ambition: NYU wants its spirit, mission, and ideals made manifest in its physical presence and its ongoing approach to urban planning.

With Doors Open to Neighbors, N.Y.U. Shapes Plan for Growth

BY KAREN ARENSON

New York University and Greenwich Village were never quite each other. The neighborhood was once a thriving hub for students and faculty, the school a steady source of punch, commerce, and intellectual vitality for the neighborhood. But some who live there today and your past have complained that the university’s expansion was driven only by the need to add space to meet the demands of its students, faculty, and staff.

Now the university, more popular than ever among the nation’s high school seniors, wants to become a part of their world. And so, in 2007, the university under President John E. Sexton organized a five-hour open house reception to officially enter the process later than many schools, this has given the University the advantage of learning from other institutions’ efforts. In 2009, the Sierra Club included NYU in the top 20 “green” universities in the country.

In the nation’s most populous and vertical city, with initiatives extending from Washington Square to its sites around the world, NYU has become a leader in urban environmental scholarship and practice.

Conversations with Neighbors

As NYU was launching these major academic and environmental initiatives and conducting the analyses and studies to begin work on a long-term growth strategy, it also undertook a significant investment to involve its neighbors in the planning process from the very beginning.

Working with Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, NYU agreed to convene a special Community Task Force on NYU Development, which involved various elected officials, community boards and organizations, and architecture and historic preservation groups. The task force’s primary focus was to help NYU develop a strategy for growth that balances the University’s space needs with respect for its community. A critical step in the process was creating a set of principles, which the University has agreed will guide its future development.

With these guidelines in mind, University planners and their design team conducted extensive community outreach over the next two years, holding several open houses and scores of smaller meetings with community, civic, faculty, and student organizations. The University presented plans in progress over five open houses between June 2007 and April 2008, each attracting hundreds of people from the NYU community and neighborhood. These events provided the planners with the chance to hear from community members, through vigorous discussions and debates in person and by collecting written feedback. The University was able to then incorporate responses into the following rounds of planning. Those suggestions and concerns have profoundly shaped the vision NYU presents in these pages.

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Community Task Force on NYU Development

Working with Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, NYU convened a special community task force starting in 2007 and involving elected officials, community associations, and architecture and historic preservation groups. The task force created a set of principles that NYU has agreed will guide its future development.

Establish criteria for development within the existing NYU footprint in the University’s core location and the surrounding neighborhoods that would prioritize:

— Identifying opportunities to decentralize facilities and actively pursuing these opportunities;
— Contextual development that is sensitive to building heights, densities, and materials;
— Reuse before new development; and
— Considering mixed-use facilities that complement Manhattan’s mixed neighborhoods, particularly in regard to ground floor uses.

Identify solutions to maximize utilization of existing assets by consulting with the community on:

— The types of facilities that can be decentralized from the Village core and surrounding neighborhoods and cultivating locations outside these areas;
— Preferences for appropriate places for vertical additions;
— Encouraging programmatic and scheduling efficiencies; and
— Opening new and reenvisioning existing recreational spaces to better serve both the student population as well as the community at large.

Support community sustainability by:

— Preserving existing diverse social and economic character through the support of community efforts to sustain affordable housing and local retail;
— Exploring the utilization of ground floors of buildings for community-oriented uses such as local retail, gallery spaces for local artists, nonprofit users and other providers of community services; and
— Generating a tenant relocation policy for legal, residential tenants, in the event that construction or conversion necessitates the relocation of tenants.

Respect for the community’s existing qualities of life including, but not limited to:

— Taking measures to mitigate effects of construction such as noise, dust, work hours; sound mitigation for mechanical equipment; and construction staging;
— Reaching out early and often for community consultation related to major construction; and
— Committing to a community-oriented public process for reviewing NYU’s proposed projects and developments.

Make thoughtful urban and architectural design a priority by:

— Respecting the limitations of the urban environment, including the impact on New York City’s infrastructure;
— Improving the quality of open spaces; and
— Actively soliciting, utilizing, and implementing input from the community in the design process.

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NYU 2031: In Summary

**Growth**

The University will meet the needs of its faculty and student population and its research and academic programs.

— NYU cannot let space constraints limit its academic ambitions.
— NYU will optimize its endowments, be they financial, temporal, or locational.
— NYU will seek opportunities to enhance its presence and promote New York City’s future.

**Sustainability**

The University will be sensitive to the potential for placing undue stress on its cultural and physical environments.

— NYU will support a sustainable future for itself and its community.
— NYU will promote pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use communities with accessible open space.
— NYU will build only when necessary and will remain committed to principles of adaptive reuse. And when it builds, NYU will strive to use the highest standards of green building technology.

**Awareness**

The University will consider the community, the neighborhoods, and the city that it depends on.

— NYU’s primary location at Washington Square will remain the vital center of a local and global network.
— NYU’s success is interdependent with its city, neighborhood, and community. Transparency in NYU’s action and dialogue will be paramount.
— NYU will prioritize thoughtful urban and architectural design.
— NYU will respect the limitations of its urban environments.