

FSC Faculty Survey on NYU 2031: Qualitative Assessment to Open-Ended Items

Introduction

There were 3 open-ended items in the survey. The mitigation question (Q8) asked respondents for recommendations regarding measures NYU could take to reduce the impact of the proposed 2031 construction in addition to those to which it is already committed.

The second open-ended question (Q9) asked for additional thoughts about possible advantages of the NYU 2031 Plan, and the third open-ended item (Q10) asked for additional thoughts about possible disadvantages of the 2031 Plan.

The Faculty Senators Council conducted a content analysis of the comments made in response to the three open-ended questions and reached agreement on the categories presented below. Comments were coded to reflect the categories. Some comments fit more than one category and were coded accordingly.

Mitigation Comments by Category (Q8)

In compliance with New York City laws requiring that construction projects take "practicable measures" to mitigate the impact of noise and dust, NYU has already made a commitment to provide soundproof windows and insulate or replace air conditioners in Washington Square, Silver Towers, as well as off-site buildings, wherever needed. Are there other measures you would recommend to ameliorate the impact of the proposed 2031 construction?

TOTAL Responses=357

Category	Number
Lack of confidence in mitigation efforts	119
Do not move forward/alternative plan	75
Noise reduction	36
Construction schedule	36
Rent reduction/low rate mortgage	36
Air quality	28
Relocation	26
Gym facilities	18
Transportation/traffic/parking	12
Outdoor areas	11
Pest control	9
Environment	6
Comments in support	4
Hotline/emergency services	2
Other	15

Nearly a third of the mitigation comments reflected a lack of confidence that efforts would be successful. One respondent stated,

“Given my experience with the quality of materials and air conditioning units used in NYU buildings, I simply do not trust that the university will come anywhere close the quality that would go part or any way toward ameliorating the unpleasant impacts.”

Many comments in this category, as well as in the categories of noise and air quality, concerned windows. Complaints about the current windows and a lack of confidence in the sound-proof capability of new windows were frequent. One respondent stated,

“The change in windows is long overdue as it is. This would be reasonable if the plan were to replace the current windows with new windows that are not single-paned and that didn't let in so much air and sound. However, it appears that the plan is just to add an additional pane to portions of these windows, leaving the dust and air as being huge problems and only minimally ameliorating the noise issue.”

Although not related to mitigation efforts, the second most frequent comment in response to Q8 concerned changes to the plan. These included statements suggesting not to move forward with 2031, building elsewhere, and scaling back the plan.

Many comments related to noise reduction, advocating for a construction schedule that would limit work hours and place restrictions on work on weekends and holidays. Additional mitigation measures proposed by respondents included rent freezes or reductions, rent subsidies, and low rate mortgages so those who prefer to vacate NYU housing can purchase a home. In the relocation category, respondents suggested offering the option of moving to housing away from construction sites. Under the category of gym facilities, respondents suggested building a full replacement gym before closing Coles or offering discounted gym memberships in the area. Other respondents rejected the idea of a transitional gym.

In the transportation/traffic/and parking category, respondents requested an accessible parking garage, if the Washington Square Village parking facility is not in use. In addition, respondents suggested enhanced security for safe pedestrian crossing in construction zones. A number of respondents commented on the need for open space and gardens to remain available for use, including the Washington Square Village Key Park. A few respondents requested that new buildings be built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards. Two comments suggested providing a 24-hour hotline to report complaints during construction.

A few comments in support of NYU's mitigation efforts were made without further suggestions.

Advantages Comments by Category (Q9)

Do you have any additional thoughts about the possible ADVANTAGES of the NYU 2031 Plan that you would like to call to our attention?

TOTAL Responses=313

Categories	Number
No advantages/limited advantages	127
Important for long-term needs of university	42
Classrooms/academic and research space/faculty offices	29
Critiques/suggestions related to current plan	27
Negative comments on administration	21
Lack of information/transparency/confidence in plan	18
Faculty housing	15
General improved facilities/campus	11
Do not move elsewhere	10
Hotel	7
Local community/real estate interests	7
Move elsewhere	7
Coles	6
Need for more efficient utilization of current space	5
Only future advantages	2
Other	8

The most frequently mentioned advantage that might accrue from the 2031 Plan was in meeting the long term needs of the university. One respondent stated,

“I think NYU makes a great case for its reasons for expansion. We must remain highly competitive as an institution of higher learning that does not have a traditional campus.”

Another possible advantage, mentioned by 29 respondents, was increased space for faculty and students including classrooms, labs, and other academic spaces. Additional/new faculty housing was also listed as an advantage in addition to improved facilities on campus in general. Seven respondents believed the addition of the hotel would be beneficial to the NYU community, and six thought the update of Coles would be an advantage deriving from 2031.

Forty percent of the comments made in response to this question were non-responsive, i.e. rather than stating an advantage of the 2031 Plan, they instead commented that the advantages to the Plan were limited or non-existent. A few respondents stated that the plan’s advantages might only be apparent after its completion in 2031. Critiques of the current plan commented on its scale and the need to preserve or create useable green space. Negative comments referred to specifically to the administration and the lack of information, transparency, consultation, and confidence in the plan. These comments focused on financial costs, space needs/usage, improvement to academic mission, and size expansion. Several respondents commented on the

lack of efficient use of current space, including vacant faculty housing units and offices, classroom space, and underutilized outdoor space.

A number of respondents suggested moving the project elsewhere in the city to places such as Governor’s Island or the financial district. Several respondents suggested a greater focus on satellite campuses and growing globally. In contrast, a number of respondents supported growth near the core campus in Greenwich Village, particularly of academic and residential facilities.

Disadvantages Comments by Category (Q10)

Do you have any additional thoughts about the possible DISADVANTAGES of the NYU 2031 Plan that you would like to call to our attention?

TOTAL Responses=318

Categories	Number
Financial concerns/tuition prices	72
Effect on neighborhood/character of Greenwich Village/relationship with community	63
Effects of construction on quality of life of residents: noise, pollution, health	58
Faculty retention/recruitment	52
Changes to open, green space/light in apartments	36
Academic standards and mission	19
Density/increased traffic	16
Lack of communication/transparency on space needs/space utilization	13
Critiques/suggestions on plan	13
Attitudes on growth in space and students	13
Administration's lack of faculty consultation/disrespect for faculty	12
Comments in support/only an issue for those who live near construction	12
Need to renovate/better use of existing buildings	12
Coles	7
No disadvantages	6
Student Housing/increased student traffic	4
Other	23

The concerns regarding the 2031 Plan mentioned most frequently by the respondents had to do with the cost of the plan, financial risk, the possible consequences for the financial stability or even viability of the university, as well as the impact on student tuition and debt. Many respondents commented on the need for better communication regarding the business plan. Many comments referred to the lack of consultation with faculty with respect to space needs and utilization of space.

Several of the categories of disadvantages of the 2031 Plan concern the quality of life for people who live and work in Greenwich Village, particularly those in and near the superblocks containing Washington Square Village and Silver Towers. The concerns are both the immediate

impact of “living in a construction zone” for several years with the attendant noise, dust, and disruption, and the long-term impact of the scale and nature of the 2031 Plan. Many respondents decry the loss of the existing “oases” of safe, open, tranquil green spaces where children and adults can walk, play, and find refuge from the city. In addition, the loss of sunlight, views, a parking garage, and a gymnasium, along with diminished privacy, and the increase in the density of pedestrian and street traffic that will accompany the new buildings, dormitories, retail stores, and a hotel, all contribute to a sense of the imminent and permanent reduction in the quality of life of those living in and near the superblocks.

For families with young children, the loss of the WSV Key Park is particularly keenly felt. One respondent commented:

“It [Key Park] is the heart of the university as far as the faculty [with young children] are concerned...it is the most social place in our lives and leads to a feeling of community that is very strong...”

Many comments focused on the effect of faculty retention and recruitment and included statements about personal plans to move to other universities, or the likelihood that colleagues might do so. Several comments focused on the challenge of living and raising a family in New York City and the effect construction will have on housing and quality of life.

Comments also focused on the plan’s academic mission, and suggested that the project has no solid educational rationale and is driven by growth at the expense of quality. Several respondents also feared a decline in admissions standards and increased acceptance rates to fund the project. Respondents also suggested the need for better use of existing space.

Respondents offered suggestions, including scaling back the plan and critiques on architectural design.

A number of respondents offered their support of the plan and also stated it is only an issue for those who live near construction.