



## NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

A private university in the public service

### Government and Community Engagement

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**Alicia D. Hurley, Ph.D.** *Vice President*

May 11, 2012

The Honorable Amanda Burden  
Chair, New York City Planning Commission  
22 Reade Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairwoman Burden:

The attached materials respond to questions raised by you and your fellow Commissioners at the public review session on the NYU Core Project held on Monday, May 7, 2012. Included in this submission are responses to the inquiries on faculty housing, the proposed Bleecker building, and the temporary gym. NYU intends to submit further materials next week to respond to other questions raised at the public review session on May 7.

We thank you and the Commission for your thoughtful and thorough deliberations on this project, which is a critical component of meeting our future needs. The University's projected needs for its Core campus are based on a careful review and analysis of our current inventory of facilities; the known future NYU projects at the Core campus and elsewhere in New York City (as discussed in our submission to the Commission on May 4, 2012); the severe compression of our facilities at the Core; and the articulated academic plans laid out by each of our deans. We have identified specific needs:

- Tisch performance space, Steinhardt teaching labs, freshmen dorms and faculty and visiting-faculty housing in the Zipper on the South Block; and,
- a critical mass of classroom space, relocation of the Wagner School and Sociology Department headquarters, additional student-services and faculty-office space on the North Block, which also allows for decompression and re-purposing of NYU facilities in the Loft Blocks and particularly for scientific research facilities.

Detailed information about these needs were provided in the DEIS and as part of our May 4, 2012 submission.

The University's mission is to transmit knowledge and generate ideas and advance research that benefit society. To fulfill this mission requires many things, including adequate physical space. As the University has documented in prior submissions to the Commission, our current facilities are inadequate to meet present needs, much less to accommodate any plans for even modest faculty and student incremental growth over the coming years. Decompression and modernization of the existing schools and departments that must remain at the Core Campus is critical to the future success of the University. We believe we have made a compelling case for space to meet our educational goals, and for why certain of those needs must be located near our existing Washington Square facilities.

Near the end of the review session, Commissioner Chen asked whether the multiple cuts to the NYU Core Project that have been put forward for the Commission's consideration, if adopted and considered cumulatively, would cause the Project to suffer "death by a 1,000 cuts." We would like to take a moment to answer that question. The answer has two components.

First, as the Commission knows, the Core project has components that have high fixed costs - the demolition and reconstruction of the Coles gym, NYU's commitment to make most of the development potential of the valuable Morton Williams property available to the School Construction Authority to build a public school (if it elects to take advantage of that opportunity within a specified time period), the demolition and reconstruction of the parking lot on the North Block, and the construction of large below-grade foundations for the project buildings. To the extent "cuts" to the project reduce its square footage, those fixed costs are distributed over less new space and thus considerably increase the premium of creating new space. Such cost increases are harmful and counterproductive to the success of the University's mission. At the same time, the University recognizes that the Commission must consider legitimate planning criteria and the input of the community in addition to NYU's needs.

Second, to the extent that potential "cuts" reduce our ability to locate facilities on the superblocks, those cuts would cause the University to seek to locate such facilities at other locations in the neighborhood, proximate to the Core. As discussed in the DEIS, the search for alternative locations in the area is greatly complicated by the expansive historic districts that exist in the area (which effectively preclude any substantial new buildings in those districts) and the very high price of real estate in the area and New York City generally. These factors cause the University to conclude that the superblocks, which the University already owns and which have been part of its campus for decades, are the most appropriate location to build the facilities that are required to meet our needs at our Core campus. Conversely, the University believes that requiring us to locate additional facilities at other locations in the neighborhood, instead of the superblocks that are already within our footprint, would not reduce impacts on the community but instead exacerbate those impacts and would likely draw their own community opposition.

As for two specific concerns raised by the Commission about the Commercial Overlay area and the hotel:

- The Commercial Overlay in the loft block area is a response to early broader community discussions and complaints (2007-2009) that many of our University buildings do not meet the street in an accessible or “pedestrian-friendly” manner and instead present blank, nontransparent facades. The ability to put small community-oriented retail on the ground floors of our buildings is intended to provide a better urban context and neighborhood amenities. The proposal for the commercial overlay is driven by that urban design principle, not by academic mission.
- With regard to the hotel, the need for proximate facilities that are affordable and can be guaranteed and booked well in advance is a real one for a university that hosts thousands of visitors annually for a wide range of activities. In addition, we have been able over the last decade to develop and strengthen a global network of scholars and students, which has led to an increasing demand for accommodations near the University for visiting scholars. Additionally, NYU hosts numerous conferences throughout the academic year that are attended by persons who need reasonably affordable accommodations in the area.

Thank you for your further consideration of our application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia D. Hurley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alicia D. Hurley, Ph.D.  
Vice President

## NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - FACULTY HOUSING

### Existing Profile

NYU owns just over 2,000 units of housing mainly dedicated to faculty.

Persons other than faculty residing in NYU-owned housing include non-affiliates, post-doctoral fellows, retirees, administrators, visiting faculty, and graduate students.

NYU Affiliates comprise 85% of the units; 15% of the units are occupied by non-affiliates whose tenancies are guided by NYS/NYC rent regulations (DHCR).

Most of NYU's housing units are located in the complexes on the two Superblocks proposed for re-development via the NYU Core plan. The NYU Core plan would leave the existing apartment buildings (Washington Square Village and University Village) in place.

- The University acquired the Washington Square Village complex from a private developer in the 1950s. The complex was **built with primarily studios and 1-bedroom** units and at acquisition, tenants resided in the complex, some of whom remain in the buildings today. At present, approximately sixty percent of the roughly 1,000 units are studios or 1-bedrooms. The University has combined adjacent smaller units to create larger units to be able to recruit and accommodate faculty members and their families.
- In the 1960s the University developed University Village, which is comprised of the two NYU Silver Towers as well as 505 LaGuardia Place, a Mitchell Lama development. The two Silver Towers are NYU faculty-housing buildings that were built with 2 to 3 bedrooms to accommodate families with children. There are 350 units in the two towers.

### Vacancy Rates

In response to your inquiry regarding vacancies, the University generally maintains about a 7 percent vacancy rate. This arises mainly as a result of the following factors:

1. Leaving vacant some studios and 1-bedroom apartments as they become available in order to convert them into larger units that are suitable for NYU faculty who are already in NYU housing, but with growing families; or for new faculty who are being recruited to teach and conduct research at NYU. We recruit our faculty from around the nation, indeed, internationally, so most do not already reside in New York. In the past decade, the University has completed over 60 of these types of conversions.
2. The time span that it takes to renovate units, which can take from 2 months to over a year depending on the extent of the renovation required.
3. The rhythms of an academic institution, which require that an apartment be available for a faculty recruitment effort, which can take months between the time recruitment of a particular faculty member begins and the time that a faculty member and family move into the apartment.

### Increase in the Number of Faculty Members Living in NYU Housing

Since 1992 (a 20-year span), there has been an increase in tenured and tenure-track faculty who live in University housing, from 1150 to 1470 (320 additional faculty members). Looking ahead, projections of faculty growth and the need to accommodate visiting faculty will add to the demand for housing. For example, in fall 2012, the University will be hiring approximately 50 new faculty to New York City who will live in NYU housing. We also have a significant number of visiting faculty - currently about 90 - for whom the University provides housing. The number of visiting faculty and postdocs who will be added to support the "global network university" is projected to grow to at least 200 annually within the next 7 to 10 years.

### NYU - Use of Bleecker Building

The University has offered the location at Bleecker and LaGuardia for the City/School Construction Authority to build a 100,000 GSF K-8 public school. This offer was based on years of community outreach where school overcrowding was cited as one of the main concerns.

The SCA will have until 2025 to advise the University as to whether it will take the site for a public school.

If the SCA declares that it does not need the site to build a public school, the University would then have the right to build a 100,000 GSF building on the site (within the same approved parameters and zoning for the public school). The floor-plates are most compatible with academic uses, such as faculty research spaces and offices - the exact program cannot be determined at this point, given the numerous variables involved.

### NYU - Temporary Gym

The University has a need to locate its competitive NCAA athletic programs during the Zipper Building construction, which will take the Coles gym off-line until it can be re-opened in the Zipper Building.

Without the temporary gym on the North Superblock, the University is assembling a Task Force that will work over the next year to decide on the best strategy to meet our competitive athletic needs. The Task Force may consider the potential for interim use of one or more existing athletic facilities in New York City on a temporary basis, or the construction of a temporary gym at a different location. If the strategy to be followed would involve construction of a temporary gym at a different location, a process would be undertaken to identify a suitable location. A specific site has not been determined and will not be until a later date.