

## Executive Summary

### Establishment, Charge, and Scope

The University Space Priorities Working Group was established in October 2012 to provide definitive guidance on the criteria and principles that should inform New York University's use of space on its core campus, in and around Washington Square Park, and to provide specific recommendations on the possibility of redeveloping NYU-owned land bounded by West Houston Street to the south, Mercer Street to the east, La Guardia Place to the west, and West Third Street to the north, often described as "the Superblocks." Given that construction on the North Block cannot begin until 2022 at the earliest, the Working Group focused its attention and analysis on the South Block.

### Addressing the Needs for Space: Main Recommendation

The University should address its current needs for space by redeveloping the Coles Sports Center site to provide for the following:

- At least 80 classrooms, ranging in size from small seminar rooms to large lecture halls
- One large theater and four workshop theaters, as well as other specialized academic spaces for the performing arts
- Dedicated student study and student life spaces
- A new athletic and recreation center, which includes an assembly facility for community emergencies
- Residence halls to accommodate up to 500 freshman students
- Housing for roughly 100 NYU faculty families

#### Recommended Allocation of Space for Coles Site

Project/Purpose	Gross Square Feet (GSF)
<b>1. Academic Space:</b>	
General-purpose Classrooms	132,000–214,000
Academic Space for the Performing Arts	195,000
Student Study & Student Life Space	40,000
<b>Academic Space Subtotal:</b>	<b>367,000–449,000</b>
<b>2. Sports Center &amp; Emergency Community Facility</b>	150,000
<b>3. Student Housing</b>	150,000
<b>4. Faculty Housing</b>	150,000
<b>Total Gross Square Footage:</b>	<b>817,000–899,000</b>

### Guiding Principles

It was evident from the start that the Working Group's recommendations—no matter how carefully crafted—would be unable to meet the needs of every constituency or satisfy every concern within the University or the community at large.

To balance the divergence of views and steer the Working Group's fact-finding and recommendations, the Working Group settled on four guiding principles.

1. The University has an obligation to its students to provide adequate space for their educational purposes, including their interactions with faculty and staff.

2. The University has an obligation to advance improvements on the Superblocks, which directly affect NYU residents, community residents, the neighborhood, faculty, and students.
3. Any construction project should leave the neighborhood a better place in which to live.
4. The University's proposed Capital Spending and Financing Plan should be fiscally responsible, and the process of planning and budgeting should be transparent.

### **Academic Space Is the Main Priority**

The Working Group identified a critical shortage of space to serve NYU's current academic mission and to sustain the University's momentum as a leading institution of higher education. The Full Report provides a detailed analysis showing the need for more general-purpose classrooms, student study and meeting space, and specialized space to support programs of study in the performing arts. Academic space should be the University's highest priority and comprises close to 50% of the total use of space on the Coles Site in the Working Group's recommendations.

### **The Core: A Precious and Irreplaceable Asset**

The area around Washington Square, which includes the Coles Sports Center Site, is at once the heart of NYU, the closest thing to a campus for a University without a campus, and an integral piece of a dense and historically rich New York City neighborhood. The Core is where the majority of undergraduate teaching and associated student activities takes place, where most of the University's academic departments and research laboratories are located, and where many students and faculty live.

The Working Group believes that NYU should continue to concentrate its academic activities within the Core to the greatest extent possible and that increasing the density of activities within the Core improves the academic quality of the institution. For students and faculty alike, proximity to the Core is a precious and irreplaceable asset.

### **Stewardship and Quality of Life: A Higher Level of Care and Attention**

The use and care of the land and buildings owned by the University in and around the Core must support and enhance the neighborhood's quality of life. The Superblocks and the neighborhood surrounding them should be better places in which to live: better in terms of their physical environment and better in terms of the relationship between NYU and the community.

Future planning and maintenance of the built and public spaces on the Superblocks should involve a new University-wide Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee composed of representatives from all relevant University constituents, as well as representatives from the tenants associations in the NYU-owned properties on the Superblocks: Washington Square Village and Silver Towers.

### **Community Assembly and Environmental Sustainability**

Events surrounding Superstorm Sandy reminded the Working Group that the University could serve as a place of community assembly and support during local emergencies. The Working Group recommends that the University increase its reliance on renewable energy systems and design the new Coles Sports Center to serve as an assembly point during local emergencies, providing University and community residents with access to electricity, shelter, and other basic amenities.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

The Working Group concluded that the University's Capital Spending and Financing Plan is based on reasonably conservative and prudent assumptions and that the Working Group's recommendations for construction on the Coles Site are within NYU's current fiscal means. The University need not—and should not—adjust future tuition fees or faculty, administrative, or staff salary assumptions to cover capital costs.

## **The North Block and the Morton Williams Site**

Before any major construction takes place on the North Block, where no construction can take place until 2022 at the earliest, or the site where the Morton Williams supermarket currently stands, the University should consult with a new advisory group similar in composition to the University Space Priorities Working Group.

## **Transparency and Governance**

From the outset, all documents received and reviewed by the Working Group, as well as all Working Group meeting agendas and summaries, were publicly available via an open website. The Working Group is confident that its process of review, consultation, and analysis offers a potential model for University-wide deliberative and advisory bodies, a model based on transparency and broad consultation, a model that advances the University's effort to re-imagine its mechanisms for governance.

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## **About the Working Group: Composition and Process**

The 26-member Working Group—composed primarily of faculty representatives appointed by the schools and the Faculty Senators Council, as well as representatives from the Student Senators Council, Administrative Management Council, and the University Administration—undertook extensive consultations with members of the University and community neighbors and gathered new data on all categories of space. In July 2013, the Working Group published an Interim Report to highlight its provisional conclusions and to guide its ongoing deliberations with University and community constituents.

## Recommendations

### Main Recommendation

The Working Group recommends that the Coles Site on the South Block should include the following uses and allocations in terms of GSF.

#### Recommended Allocation of Space for Coles Site

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## I. Space

### General-Purpose Classrooms

Build between 132,000 and 214,000 GSF of general-purpose classrooms to accommodate a variety of pedagogical styles, ranging from large lecture halls to small seminar and group-work rooms.

### Performance Space

1. Build a large proscenium theater, four flexible black box theaters, production workshops, storage, and specialized academic spaces for the performing arts, planned in consultation with theater architects and sound designers.
2. Design theatre and studio spaces for multiple uses and make them available across schools and to the neighboring community wherever possible.

### Student Study and Student Life Space

1. Build 40,000 GSF to provide new space for individualized student study and student life needs.
2. Include study space as an integral component in all new construction and renovation, planned in consultation with the Division of Libraries.
3. Expand space options for student meetings and functions, and improve accessibility to Kimmel by reducing its use as classroom space and by decreasing or eliminating support fees required for students' use of Kimmel.

### Recreational, Athletic, and Emergency Assembly Space

1. Build a new recreational and athletic facility to serve NYU's competitive athletic and intramural teams, fitness and training classes, and recreational patrons and designed to UAA/NCAA specifications.

2. Design the new facility with the capacity to provide emergency assembly space for NYU and community neighbors.
3. Make available appropriate replacement athletic and recreational facilities during construction on the Coles Site.

### **Space for the Sciences**

The University should be alert for any opportunity to acquire a suitable site for *de novo* science lab construction somewhere in or near the Core and develop plans for a new flagship science building on such a site, to focus particularly on undergraduate science education.

### **Student Housing**

1. Build 150,000 GSF of student residence halls to accommodate up to 500 freshman students, designed to provide the best possible residential college experience, including integrated University programming to address the specific needs of freshmen.
2. Continue to make studio apartments available in faculty housing for doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars, especially those whose research requires them to be in laboratories and other specialized research spaces in or near the Core.

### **Faculty Housing**

1. Build 150,000 GSF of new faculty housing on the South Block, consisting primarily of larger units suitable for families.
2. Undertake an analysis of other options for faculty housing—such as mortgage assistance, rental assistance, and shared equity programs—in consultation with the faculty.

### **Morton Williams Site**

Review possible plans for this site with the proposed Superblock Stewardship Committee, following the decision of the School Construction Authority, expected by the end of 2014.

## **II. Stewardship and Quality of Life**

### **A Stewardship Committee**

1. Establish a standing Superblock Stewardship Committee to provide the University with on-going assessment and advice for the maintenance and improvement of quality-of-life issues concerning University properties on the Superblocks before, during, and after any construction.
  - Make all committee proceedings and related documents available for public review and ensure that the committee provides regular reports to the University.
  - Ensure that the committee is composed of faculty, including a significant number who reside on the Superblocks; a representative from each of the tenants associations; at least one student; and representatives from the University's Division of Operations, Faculty Housing Office, and Community Relations Office. Ideally, the committee would also work closely with the Housing and Benefits Committee of the Faculty Senators Council and any other relevant Senate-level committees.
  - Create a special subcommittee to advise on construction, including the final allocation of space, architectural design, environmental sustainability, and use of public spaces.

## **Related to Improved Management and Stewardship of the Superblocks**

2. Proceed immediately with suspended maintenance and improvement projects on both the South and North Blocks.<sup>1</sup>
3. Clarify the chain of responsibility within the Division of Operations and communicate it to residents of the Superblocks so that, before, during, and after construction, residents and neighbors know exactly which office and/or individual is responsible for their concern.
4. Keep the La Guardia commercial strip occupied, well lit, functional, and attractive. Explore the option to utilize the space for University needs, including the possibility of new classrooms, if commercial tenants cannot be found.
5. Identify and implement the best possible window, air-conditioning, and façade improvements on the Superblocks in consultation with residents, as soon as possible, with or without construction.
6. Continue efforts to ensure that Washington Square Village is provided with a reliable source of back-up electricity in emergency situations.
7. Increase the presence of the Office of Faculty Housing on the Superblocks to improve awareness of, and response to, ongoing quality-of-life and stewardship issues. All or part of the Office of Faculty Housing could be relocated to a space on the Superblocks, for example.
8. Set up a consistent policy for usage and maintenance of the public spaces on the Superblocks.

## **Related to Construction on the South Block**

9. Engage an independent consultant with expertise in community impacts of construction projects before any construction begins to assess whether the procedures outlined in the Restrictive Declaration are adequate and to examine any construction plans for both short-term and long-term effects on the neighboring community. This consultant should report to the Superblock Stewardship Committee to ensure transparency in the process of choosing mitigation strategies and accountability on any environmental effects of construction.<sup>2</sup>
10. Set high standards for architectural and design excellence, and meet high environmental standards of sustainability. Demonstrate leadership and innovation in terms of design and sustainability by ensuring that University buildings enhance the neighborhood.
11. Provide high-quality mitigation measures for residents on the Superblock. Reserve relocation for those NYU residents and families with exceptional health or mobility needs, and ensure that the Superblocks remain ADA-compliant throughout any construction process.
12. Establish a "work-study center" away from the construction site for faculty who currently work at home and who have no other office options.

## **III. Financing**

1. Plan and schedule capital projects at the non-Coles Sites to scale back these projects if unforeseen or unexpected developments arise.
2. Preserve current tuition assumptions even in the event of unforeseen or unexpected finan-

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<sup>1</sup> Projects that have been allowed to lapse, such as the Coles sinkhole, the rocket ship playground, the Mercer Street dog run, the green space behind the commercial strip on La Guardia Place, the pavement throughout Washington Square Village, and the broken and redundant fencing on both blocks, should be prioritized.

<sup>2</sup> Such independent consultants are called "industrial hygienists" and can be accessed through OSHA, which routinely sets guidelines for their assessments. [http://www.osha.gov/dte/library/industrial\\_hygiene/industrial\\_hygiene.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/dte/library/industrial_hygiene/industrial_hygiene.pdf) Although the Restrictive Declaration for the Core project calls for a consultant, that consultant is hired by the city of New York and paid for by New York University.

cial shocks. Address these shocks as much as possible by delaying capital projects and/or reducing cash reserve targets.

3. Preserve current faculty, administrative, and staff salary assumptions (including benefits) even in the event of unforeseen or unexpected financial shocks. Address these shocks as much as possible by delaying capital projects and/or reducing cash reserve targets.
4. Commit to an increase in fundraising for capital purposes, replacing the current target of \$136 million with a substantially higher target.
5. Provide the University Senate with the same detailed financial information reviewed by the Working Group on a regular basis.