



## NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

To: The NYU Community  
From: Ted Magder, on behalf of the University Space Priorities Working Group  
Date: January 30, 2013  
Re: Update on the University Space Priorities Working Group: January 2013

---

Dear Fellow Members of the University Community,

I write on behalf of the University Space Priorities Working Group with a brief overview of our work to date.

Established in September 2012, the Working Group is composed of 20 faculty representatives appointed by the schools and the Faculty Senators Council, as well as two representatives each from the Student Senators Council, the Administrative Management Council, and University administration.

We came together to examine NYU's projected space needs and to give advice on how they can best be met. Our work stems from New York City Council's approval last July of NYU's application for new construction on the "superblocks," the NYU-owned land bounded by Houston to the south, Mercer to the east, La Guardia Place to the west, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to the north, with Bleecker bisecting the area into a "southern" and "northern" block. The core NYU plan envisions the construction of new classroom space, student dorms, faculty housing, office space, labs, and performance spaces. If built to maximum density, the plan would add a total of 1.92 million square feet to the Washington Square campus. As a point of comparison, Bobst library is roughly 450,000 square feet.

The immediate focus of our attention is the southern superblock, specifically the current site of Coles gym and the Morton Williams supermarket. NYU has no plans for construction on the northern block until 2022 at the earliest. Of the two sites on the southern block, the Coles gym site represents nearly 50% of the total approved density. As part of City Council's approval, the School Construction Authority (SCA) has until the end of 2014 to exercise an option to partner with NYU on construction at the Morton Williams site: SCA would build and operate a public school above-grade, and NYU would take possession of the below-grade space. Finally, if no construction takes place on either block within 10 years of the City's approval, the plan expires in its entirety.

The approval from New York City is a "zoning envelope;" in other words, an outer limit of permissible development. The University must now decide how to make use of it. The plan permits NYU to build on land that it already owns, but does not require it to do so. The University could decide that it would be best to build only a part of what the City Council permitted, or not to build at all. Space needs might also be met by purchasing or leasing new real estate, instead of, or in combination with, construction on the superblocks.

The mission of the Working Group is to provide the University with definitive guidance on space, including: principles and priorities that should inform its development and use; strategies to improve the efficiency and usage of existing space; advice on the improvement of open space; recommendations for the amelioration of the impact of any construction on residents on the Washington Square campus; and specific advice on the construction or acquisition of new space within or near the core Washington Square neighborhood to feasibly and responsibly meet the University's needs for space. To exercise our charge, we have been exploring the full range of options available to the University for the development of new space and the renovation of existing space, including the possibility of no new construction on the southern or northern blocks.

Over the last four months we have cast a broad net to gather the information we need in order to make well-considered and responsible recommendations. We have reviewed existing documents, having requested and received new material on all facets of space as a University resource and strategic need. We have looked at how the University determines its space needs and establishes its strategic priorities. We have

begun to examine classroom use, including utilization rates and current and projected needs, and plan to explore options for increasing the efficient use of classroom space. The Working Group has also reviewed an array of documents regarding current and projected academic space needs, ranging from the 2002 "[Transition Team Academic Space Committee Final Report](#)," to the Provost's November 2012 presentation, "[Academic Space & Academic Momentum](#)," with supporting documentation on [new and incremental academic needs](#) in the core through 2020. We have also reviewed details regarding current University space usage in the core, construction and renovation over the past decade, new [real estate opportunities](#) in both the core and other parts of the city, as well as possibilities for the expansion of academic space within the core through additional renovation and [administrative office relocation](#). We spent the bulk of two meetings reviewing the [University's financial planning](#) documents in order to understand the implications of different kinds of new construction or real estate acquisition for the University's debt and future financial health. A subcommittee on finance will continue this review.

We have more to do before we begin to formulate recommendations, including an examination of faculty housing, a thorough assessment of student space -- such as study space, dormitories, as well as space for extra-curricular activities -- a review of Coles gym and other NYU athletic and recreational spaces near the square, and an assessment of the quality of life implications of possible construction in the core and options for minimizing its impact.

From the outset, we have been committed to openness and transparency in our proceedings. All documents provided by the University administration, along with our meeting agendas and summaries, are publicly available on the Working Group's [website](#). New documents are posted on our website as soon as possible, and you can register to receive notification of updates. The Working Group encourages all members of the community to submit written comments at any time.

As we move toward the deliberative phase of our work, we shall seek every opportunity for conversation and consultation with all members of the University community. As part of that effort, we invite you to contact members of the Working Group via our website to arrange a meeting.

We welcome your thoughts on all aspects of our work, and look forward to a sustained and productive dialogue as we advance toward fulfillment of our charge.

On behalf of the members of the Working Group,

Ted Magder, Chair

Barbara Albrecht

Robert Berne

John Billings

Corey Blay

Sewin Chan

Mary Cowman

Mariam Ehrari

David Engel

Allyson Green

Wen-Jui Han

James Jacobs

Angela Kamer

Perri Klass

Martin Kurth

Laurence Maslon

Panos Mavromatis

J. Anthony Movshon

Anthony Saunders

Rosemary Scanlon

Andrew Schotter

Jalal Shatah

Matt Stanley

David Vintinner

Larry White

Diane Yu