

March 27, 2012

Hon. Scott Stringer  
Manhattan Borough President  
One Centre Street, 19th floor  
New York, NY 10007

Re: NYU expansion ULURP

Dear Borough President Stringer:

We are writing on behalf of the 30+ businesses and Village residents who have joined Villagers for a Sustainable Neighborhood to urge you to negotiate major changes to the New York University ULURP application.

The Washington Square Hotel and a coalition of small local businesses and community organizations recognize, understand and appreciate the many benefits of NYU for Greenwich Village and New York City. However, we feel the current expansion plans are out-of-scale with the historic nature of Greenwich Village and would permanently tarnish the character of the neighborhood. We are asking you to broker a compromise that significantly reduces density, expands opportunities for local business, creates quality, accessible open space and adds infrastructure improvements that ensure our neighborhood is not completely overwhelmed.

We believe that a compromise can be struck so that this rezoning benefits the community by:

- increasing the amount of quality, publicly accessible open space;
- lowering the overall density to remain consistent with the surrounding neighborhood;
- refraining from overwhelming our community with commercial development;
- maintaining affordable housing at 505 LaGuardia Place and Washington Square Village; and
- providing infrastructure improvements, like renovating the subway stations and paying for a new school for our neighborhood – which already has too few seats for the kids who live here.

### **Public Open Space**

Located within Manhattan Community Board 2, our district currently has the second lowest amount of open space in the entire City. NYU has described four acres of redesigned open space as one of the premier benefits of its plan. Unfortunately, the redesigns do not meet the needs of the community. We need more open space, not just redesigned open space.

In addition, the redesign makes the open space less beneficial to the community, not more. Specifically, the Municipal Art Society of New York stated the following in its position statement (in referring to 60,000 square feet of open space located on the north block between the two Washington Square Village Apartment Buildings):

*“The interior space, controlled by NYU, will be open to the public; however, “publicly-accessible” but privately owned open space often fails to be a public amenity due to physical barriers, inadequate programming and restricted hours of operation. NYU’s plans for the proposed parkland spaces include landscaping that appears to obstruct rather than invite entry into the site.”*

We have the following additional concerns:

Playgrounds: Key Park should be maintained and a minimum of equal square footage of public accessible open space for Mercer Playground should be identified prior to construction.

Community Gardens: The LaGuardia Corner Gardens are an important part of the neighborhood, and must be protected.

Coles Gymnasium: NYU's characterization of the Jerome S. Coles Sports Center as open space is highly misleading. Its offer of the NYU Athletic facility in the proposed Zipper Building as well as its temporary gymnasium fail to compensate for the existing lack of public accessible open space within our community. Additionally, the Zipper Building should be constructed within the footprint of the current Coles Sports Center.

The NYU plan falls far short of what the community needs and its open space plan will result in less than a 1:1 ratio of replacement of publicly accessible open spaces. We urge you to call upon NYU to address this need as NYU must increase of the amount of publicly accessible open spaces. NYU should not be allowed to count private sites like the proposed Temporary Gymnasium and Coles Sports Center in its calculations of determining open space since they are not public spaces.

### **Density**

NYU is considering adding an additional 2.4 million square feet within the two superblocks. This is roughly the size of the Empire State Building. Even spread out over the two superblocks, this development is far out of scale for the neighborhood.

Within NYU's plan is 1,000,000 square feet of space below grade level, which allows them to circumvent density restrictions since this square footage would not be calculated into floor area regulations. But because it will be used as academic space, it will increase traffic and crowding in the neighborhood.

In addition, the planned buildings are entirely out of context of the neighborhood. We recommend the following changes:

- **Bleecker Building** is twice as tall as buildings across from LaGuardia Place and almost 50 feet higher than the Washington Square Village complex across the street. It should not be allowed to tower over the 5-story buildings nearby.
- **LaGuardia Building** is 158 feet tall. Instead it should mirror the buildings across the street.
- **Mercer Building** is proposed at a height of 248 feet (14 stories) which will overwhelm the current Washington Square Village Buildings by almost 90 feet. This must be eliminated or substantially scaled back.
- **Temporary Gymnasium** should be relocated to an area outside of the core zone so that it doesn't needlessly disrupt the neighborhood.
- **Zipper Building's** boundaries should be limited to the footprint of Coles Sports Center and its density should be significantly decreased.

The New York chapter of the American Planning Association noted in their comments that "massing of the 'zipper building' and the hotel along Mercer Street is a cause of some concern as it seems to be excessive and tends to reinforce the fortress mentality separating school properties from others."

### **Infrastructure**

Clearly, even a scaled down version of NYU's proposal will cause infrastructure issues that must be remediated. We believe NYU should:

- Provide a firm commitment for financing the construction of a stand-alone public school, independent of the ULURP process;
- Maintain affordable housing units and 505 LaGuardia Place and Washington Square Village in perpetuity;

- Support the mapping of the strips of park as parkland and return them to the New York City Department of Parks. This land should remain untouched and no easements granted on these sites; and
- Improve the already-overcrowded subway stations that serve the neighborhood.

We understand the importance of this proposal for NYU. We want NYU to remain competitive and we appreciate NYU's contributions to the economic, civic and educational fabrics of our City. However, it is equally critical for NYU to understand that it is a part of a shared community with Greenwich Village residents and business.

We urge you to work with NYU to come to a compromise that is in the best interests of all those involved.

Sincerely,

Judy Paul  
Owner and CEO, Washington Square Hotel

Dharma Chandra  
Owner, Sushi Yawa

Barry Chatlani  
Owner, Fashion Shoppe Express

David Kwok  
Owner, Kinway Shoes

Adam Seini  
Owner, Cutting Edge Body Arts

Ruqayyah Sall and Abdul Sall  
Co-Owners, L'impasse Boutique

Enrique Cruz III  
Manager, Furry Paws VII

Andy Schulman  
Owner, DoggyStyle nyc

Vicki Sando  
Owner, Marumi

Roy Preston  
Owner, The Little Lebowski

Howard and Myra Donowitz  
Owners, Tudor Rose Antiques

Kathy Okroashvilli  
Manager, Jubilee Shoes

Massimo Rellini  
Owner, Ponte Vecchio Restaurant

Alex Kossi  
Owner, Zinc Bar

Bob Miller  
Owner, Ilana Fine Jewelry

Mayer Ebbo  
Owner, Mind Boggler

Noam Dworman  
Owner, Comedy Cellar and Olive Tree Café

Vittorio Antonini  
Owner, La Lanterna

Ofria Bronfeld  
Owner, Economy Foam & Futons

Sandra Guiffre  
Owner, Village Postal Center

Muhammad Akmal  
Owner, New University Stationary

Hamlet Tallaj  
Owner, Hamlet's Vintage

Larry Cerrone  
Director of Operations, Café Wha? and The Groove

Mark Greenberg  
Owner, Sullivan Street Tea & Spice Company

Cc: Mayor Michael Bloomberg  
Speaker Christine Quinn  
Councilmember Margaret Chin  
City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden  
City Planning Commission