



**APA NY Metro Chapter Draft Statement on the NYU 2021 Master Plan, May 2011**  
**CEQR #: 11DCP121M**

The New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association appreciates the opportunity to provide professional input on the proposed NYU Master Plan currently before the New York City Planning Commission. We are a professional and educational association of more than 1,450 planners working in New York City, Long Island, Westchester, and the lower Hudson Valley. The professional planners of the APA New York Metro Chapter support the growth of high quality educational facilities within the city and are interested in working with New York University on its expansion plans.

The Chapter recognizes that expansion of higher education facilities in New York City has tremendous value in the range of expertise these institutions attract, their ability to contribute to a diversified workforce, and the long-term benefits from providing a pipeline of future talent. The downside of a university's presence can occur when that institution strives to be insular and wall itself off from the rest of the city, losing connection and context. A particular strength of NYU is that it is an urban university, providing a unique and integral role within New York City and of the communities of Greenwich Village and Lower Manhattan. As planners, we look to NYU to continue its efforts to integrate its Main Campus within its Greenwich Village context, in terms of design, access, open space, sustainability, and commitments to its neighbors.

The Chapter applauds NYU on its extensive public outreach to community associations, elected officials, and the general public, especially by providing a local space where anyone can see the plans and models, and provide input. To further support these efforts, the Chapter recommends NYU provide additional evidence of their need for a 50% expansion of space in 25 years. While details about which departments are recommended for which locations are understandably in flux for such a long-term plan, the overall demand for such extensive expansion deserves additional explanation.

The Chapter appreciates NYU's efforts on the following elements (and offers additional considerations):

- Reducing the height and mass of initially proposed buildings;
- Prioritizing circulation from the corners into the super blocks;
- Proposed reduction of on-site parking spaces from 620 to 380. (We recommend investigation into further reducing this supply in support of the City's goals and NYU's location in a transit-rich environment.);
- Recognition that NYU's goals must work within the context of an existing neighborhood. (To further this objective, the lower 6th Avenue and Hudson Square manufacturing zones should be reconsidered for expansion if NYU truly wishes to have most of its facilities within a 10-minute walk.)
- Acknowledgement that NYU's plans require a long-term solution, but must not be overly disruptive in the short-term, and developing a phased plan that maintains all existing community facilities and services throughout implementation. (A schedule for community reporting should be established, to maintain open communication throughout the life of the plan's implementation and minimize construction impacts.)

The New York Metro Chapter recommends NYU revisit the following elements to maximize integration within the neighborhood and re-present an updated plan to receive additional support:

- A significant part of the justification for the expansion is the dire need for additional academic space, especially when compared with the space provided by universities of the same stature. However, the university's argument becomes weakened with the inclusion of a hotel as part of early phases. We would have expected the addition of residential and academic spaces as the first priority and the hotel dilutes that effort. Additionally, a university hotel tends to insulate the university by supplying all of their needs themselves, as opposed to relying on the community to provide some of those requirements and thereby fostering a higher level of interaction.
- Buildings should be accessible from both the street as well as from internal space, assuring the high level of interaction with pedestrians. The entrances to the "boomerang buildings" should be reevaluated in the context, ensuring at least that there will be an active streetscape along the public street frontage and active, transparent fenestration facing the central open space.
- The height and bulk of the eastern "boomerang building" should also be reconsidered to ensure it will not overpower and shadow existing structures.
- The 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. Additional time should devote to finding solutions which would assure that the massing is more gracious and possibly porous in how it relates to adjacent non-university spaces.
- Consideration of potential impacts to Houston Street of vehicular access and loading for the proposed hotel.
- Assurance that the "pergolas" at the Washington Square Village corridor entrances are removed to assure a more welcoming public walk to the central open space, and assurances that the entrances to the central open space along LaGuardia Place and Mercer Street will not be gated.
- Design and use requirements should be memorialized (e.g. with the City) to ensure that the planned open spaces and public school remain a resource for both the city and university.
- There are serious questions about the status and use of the publicly-owned open spaces along LaGuardia Place, and the small parcels on Bleeker and West Third Streets. Community Board 2 has raised questions about these parcels and a group of organizations has applied under Section 197-c to map these as park land. Additional dialogue should be conducted to determine the outcome of these spaces with careful coordination with New York City of "publicly-accessible, privately-owned open space."
- The Plan specifies to achieve LEED Silver certification at a minimum and adaptive reuse when possible. A more significant push for sustainability assurance at the building, block, and neighborhood level should be provided, with more significant requirements for energy efficiency.
- Since the Plan is now in the CEQR phase on the Draft Scope of Work, it is important that adequate study be given alternatives including: a) a lower density alternative to consider the degree of impact of the proposed development; and b) mapping the current DOT strips as parkland instead of privatization.

The APA New York Metro Chapter thanks New York University for the opportunity to provide this input. We look forward to continue coordinating to result in a plan that works for both the University and New York City.