





# Introduction

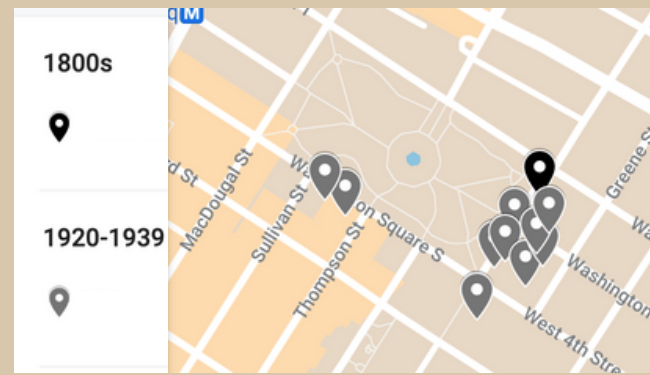
New York University (NYU) is the largest private university in the United States, with a total of 61,724 students as of the fall 2022 semester. The school owns and operates many buildings around NYC, and in recent decades has developed additional campuses around the world (New York University, n.d.-a). The years of expansions have made NYU one of the city's biggest landlords (Warerkar, 2018). As a non-profit, NYU is not required to pay property taxes, saving it an estimated \$141 million dollars in 2022 (Tey, 2022). This is money that would have gone to the city, had the buildings not been owned by a non-profit organization.

Much of the New York University campus is concentrated around Washington Square Park, and spreads throughout Greenwich Village and the surrounding neighborhoods. Over the last century the school has steadily expanded through these neighborhoods, aggravating the existing communities. Meanwhile, these neighborhoods, and their histories, are at the center of NYU's marketing campaign. Despite decades of community resistance, the school's expansion, and its plans for future expansion, seldom consider the importance of these communities. Thus, NYU is erasing the very culture of the neighborhood that makes the school appealing to prospective students.



Above: NYU's first building on Washington Square. Completed in 1895, replaced an earlier building that was completed in 1835 also for the school. Photo from May 2023

# History of NYU's Expansion & Its Implications



Map of NYU buildings around the square 1835-1939

NYU was originally founded in 1831 and located near City Hall in lower Manhattan. It purchased its first space on Washington Square East in 1833, where the school moved in 1835 (Frusciano & Petit 1997, p. 29). For much of its history, the school has dealt with periodic financial difficulties. During the 19th century, it struggled to attract enough students and never exceeded an undergraduate enrollment of 150. NYU had several competitors; initially this was mainly Columbia University uptown. In 1947, additional competition came with the founding of the “Free Academy”, which later became the City University of New York (CUNY), and Hunter College when it was founded in 1868, which were both tuition free (Frusciano & Petit 1997, p. 29).

Even with low enrollment, NYU founded several different schools during the 19th century, but did not further expand around Washington Square. In 1894, the school opened another campus in the Bronx, called University Heights. The administration moved all undergraduates to this campus, as it offered space for dorms, athletics, classrooms and other facilities on a more traditional suburban college campus (Frusciano & Petit 1997, pp. 118-119). The school's graduate programs remained on Washington Square, and NYU's main building at 100 Washington Square East was rebuilt in 1895. The new building was much larger than its predecessor, and accommodated both the university's graduate programs on the upper floors, and a commercial tenant on the lower levels (Frusciano & Petit 1997, pp. 139).

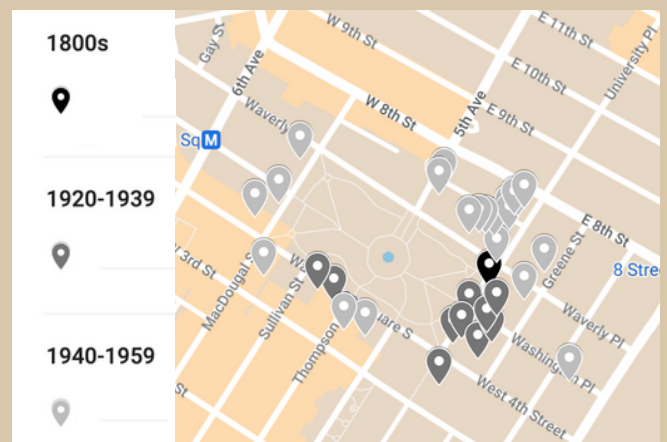
All of the undergraduates remained at the University Heights campus until 1914, when Washington Square College was founded. Washington Square College was primarily meant for commuting students, who would often attend college on a part time basis, meaning dorms were not a priority. Washington Square College's enrollment grew rapidly throughout the 1920s, and several additional buildings along Washington Square East were purchased by the University in order to accommodate the growing student body (Frusciano & Petit 1997, p. 151). By the end of the decade, the University owned all of the buildings along the east side of the park (“\$3,000,000 Building”, 1925), and was constructing a new building for the school of education on the corner of West Fourth and Greene streets (“N.Y.U. Authorizes”, 1928). They also acquired the Hotel next to the Judson Memorial church in 1925, which would eventually be used as a dorm (“Judson Hotel”, 1925).



The first major community opposition to the school's expansion came after World War II. A boom in education after the war made NYU one of the largest universities in the world, with a total of 47,155 students the year after the war, and 70,376 students by 1949 (Frusciano & Petit 1997, p. 197). In order to accommodate the new influx of students, the school began to expand its physical presence in the Village. Community members opposed the school's acquisition of One, Two and Three Washington Square North in 1946. The university intended to use two of the buildings for veterans affairs, and one for religious social groups once all of the residents had left. None of the residents were happy, and a group of artists who lived in Three Washington Square North, including Edward Hopper, fought the eviction. These residents had intended to remain in the building for the rest of their lives. On their side was a group of NYU students. Ultimately, the residents of three Washington Square North were allowed to stay not because of the community objections, but because of a technical law (Folpe 2002, p. 288).

The following year, 1947, the school announced plans to build a law center along the south side of Washington Square Park. This development was also met with community opposition. People questioned how this new development would benefit the community, or if it would threaten their quality of life (Frusciano & Petit 1997, p. 206). The South side of the park was already crowded, and community members feared it would further impact their access to the park. The development was slated for an entire block bounded by Washington Square South, West 3rd, MacDougal and Sullivan Streets (Folpe 2002, p. 291).

The new law center would displace nearly 300 people, many of whom were artists who could not afford more expensive living arrangements. In response to the proposal, a group of residents and community leaders founded the "Save Washington Square Committee" in order to fight the impending development. This committee protested, gathering a total of 8,000 signatures against the new structure. NYU's president, Harry Chase, virtually ignored the community's desires, and instead took advice from Robert Moses, the infamous city builder. Notably, Moses viewed the community's reactions to be "irresponsible". Eventually, Chase did meet with a few members of the Committee. Despite this, in 1949 the tenants who still remained began receiving eviction notices. In response, the Committee held a radio debate with a law student which brought new attention to the movement. Shortly after, over 1,500 listeners sent postcards supporting the community to Joseph Starkey, a member of the NYC council. These postcards called for an amendment to the NYC rent law that would require universities to have a "certificate of necessity", a requirement for private landlords, before they can issue evictions. However, NYU officials were able to petition the City Council to delay the vote on this amendment until everyone from the buildings had been relocated. The law center was completed in 1951 (Frusciano & Petit 1997, pp. 206-207).



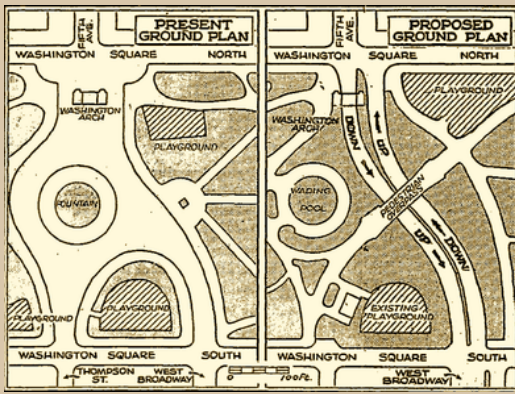


In 1947, the same year the law center was announced, a real estate developer Anthony Campagna had purchased all of the property between Thompson and West Broadway (now LaGuardia Place) along Washington Square Park South. The buildings on this strip were older, and not in the best condition, and Campagna planned to demolish them to build a 12 story apartment building. These buildings had been known as “Genius Row” and were home to several well known local residents. A plan to save the row of houses, and transform it into a “living art center” was hatched by a local resident of the Washington Mews on the opposite side of the park. The resident was William T. Manning, who was also a retired Episcopal Bishop. While the plan had support from local residents and city officials, they were never able to successfully raise enough for the plan to come into fruition, and Genius Row was entirely demolished in 1948. In July of that year, it was announced that NYU had purchased the property from Campagna. While Campagna had at first been reluctant to sell to the school, city officials, including Robert Moses who was a construction coordinator at the time, encouraged him to do so. Residents were not happy about this acquisition, and the City Rent commission even investigated possible violations. Community members also felt this acquisition was somewhat underhanded and was going to aid the school in its seeming takeover of the area around Washington Square (Folpe 2002, p. 288). Eventually, this block was used to construct the Loeb Student Center which was completed in 1959. This building was demolished in 1999, replaced by a newer and larger student center (Folpe 2002, p. 301). This is known as the Kimmel Center, and was completed in 2003 (NYU Alumni, 2008).

In 1949, NYU signed a 203 year lease for most of the property on the block bounded by Fifth avenue, 8th street and University Place along the North side of the park from the Sailors Snug Harbor organization. The university intended to use the new buildings for faculty housing, and rent the spare apartments to the general public. This acquisition was also met with community upset. The block includes historical row houses such as the Washington Mews, a row of identical historic carriage houses. Had the lease not gone through, the property would have been sold to a developer and a large apartment building would have replaced them (“Lease Widens”, 1949).

In the 1950s, the school continued to purchase, and in some cases develop, new buildings along the west side of the park. It acquired two large apartment buildings, 29 and 37 Washington Square South, which were used for faculty and administrators. In 1956, NYU built a dorm for law students at 33 Washington Square West. Built using a gift from the Charles Hayden Foundation, the former Holley Hotel was converted into a law student residence called Hayden Hall. Since 1986 it has been used as undergraduate housing (Folpe 2002, p. 294). It was renamed Lipton Hall in 2016 (Cruz 2016).

In the middle of the 20th century, the school was able to rapidly expand due to the Urban Renewal Title I Slum Clearance Program. This program was created after World War II in order to address a shortage of housing. In this program tenement buildings and those considered to be “Slum Districts” were demolished in order to build large apartment buildings. To do this, the City would acquire large pieces of land and sell it to developers at reduced rates. During this period Robert Moses, who was at the time Chairman of the Mayor’s Slum Clearance Committee, played a pivotal role in the urban renewal policies around Washington Square, and assisted NYU in their expansion (Folpe 2002, p. 299).



Above: Proposed roadway in Washington Square Park. Source: Washington Square Park Conservancy



Above: Cars in Washington Square park during the 1960s. Source: NYU Local



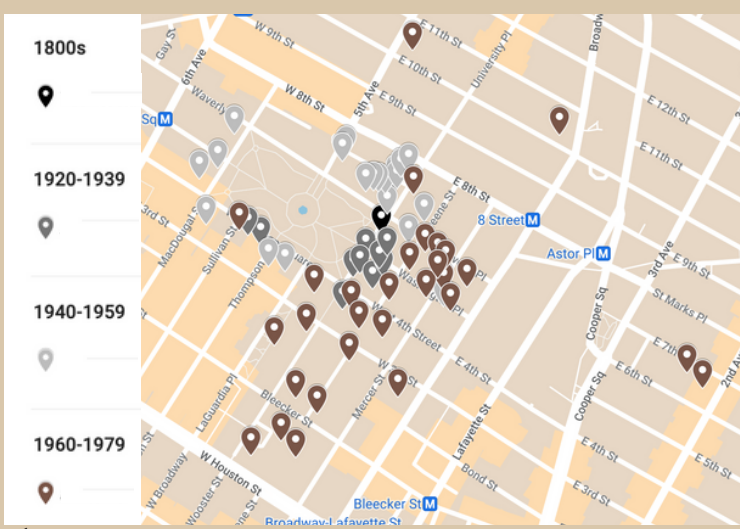
Above: Bobst Library, completed in 1972. Photo from May 2023

Moses wanted to build a large road through Washington Square Park, and the community members were vehemently opposed. His plan included removing the fountain and building one roadway in each direction. During this time, cars already traveled through the park and community members wanted to stop the practice altogether. NYU also had plans for expansion around the park. Moses and NYU began to work together in order to gain Title I Slum Clearance status for the area. This led to Moses promising NYU the space it needed for expansion as long as the school supported his plans for the area, including the roadway in Washington Square (Folpe 2002, p. 298-301).

The proposal for Slum Clearance was initially rejected for the area by the City Planning Commission and the Manhattan Borough President's Community Planning Board. However, in November of 1954 the Board of Estimate accepted the proposal, and took over the land required for Moses' "Washington Square Southeast Redevelopment" plan. This was a large piece of land starting from the southeast corner of the park that was filled with tenement housing and local businesses. Moses planned to create three large superblocks that had nine-fourteen story apartment buildings (Folpe 2002, pp. 300-301).

Initially, NYU only purchased three acres of the Title I property along the park. Part of this property was used for the Bobst Library, which was not completed until 1972 after years of community opposition and legal battles. The library, located at 71 Washington Square South, was once the location of a 15 story apartment building. Community members questioned the legality of demolishing an apartment building in order to build a library for a private university (Folpe 2002, p. 302). Community members also accused the school of planning to use the building in order to temporarily house students, something the university admitted it was planning to do (Grutzner, 1957). Many community advocates, including Jane Jacobs and then Democratic District Leader Ed Koch, were upset and fought against the large size of the library, arguing that it created a shadow over the park (Folpe 2002, p. 302). A similar debate ensued in the 1990s with the development of the new student center, the Kimmel Center, which replaced the older Loeb Student Center. The Kimmel Center is taller than the older Loeb Center, with the new center standing at an equal height to the Bobst Library, which is on the corner next to it. Community members argued that people avoid the corner of the park by the library due to the shadow it casts (Goldman, 1999).





Above: NYU Expansion up to 1979

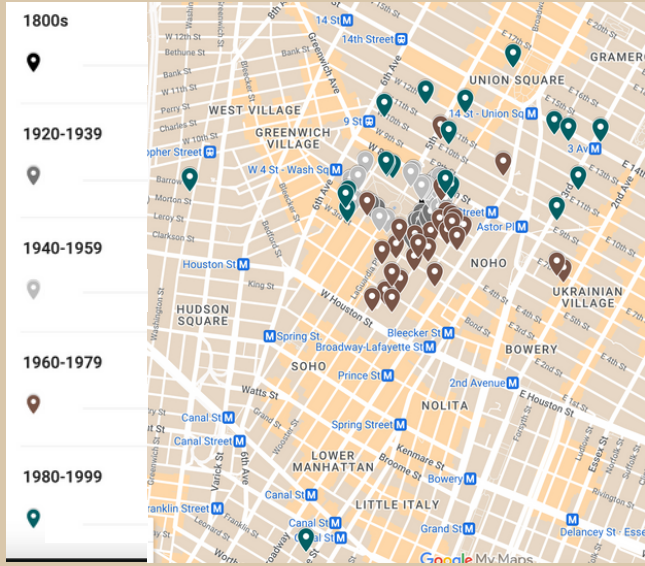


Above: University Village Silver towers in the front and Washington Square Village behind

In 1960, the Washington Square Development Corporation, who had purchased the other pieces of the Title I land, offered to sell its property to NYU. By the middle of the decade the university had purchased the land, which included Washington Square Village, a set of modernist superblocks that had been built under the Title I program. These buildings were used by the school for faculty and student housing. The school built three more housing towers on the remaining piece of land, now known as University Village. These were designed by architect I. M. Pei, and included three towers total: two to be used by the university, and the other for middle income housing (Folpe 2002, p. 301).

By the late 1960s, the university was facing financial difficulties again. The school had followed a “School of Opportunity” philosophy, accepting everyone who applied. This policy was predatory in its own way, since although they accepted everyone, many students would fail after having paid the tuition. Many students would opt to go to public universities which either had free or much cheaper tuition, leading to declining enrollment. In order to curtail this problem, which only worsened the school’s fiscal issues, the university began transitioning to a new admissions model, with the aim of becoming a prestigious university. Part of the reason for the heightened admissions standard was to attract more full time students and faculty. Under the school of opportunity admissions standards, many of the students and faculty in the school were part time, and came from within the New York City area. Under the new admissions model, more students and faculty from outside of the city would come to the school. Additional residential facilities were built to accommodate a total of 1,900 students both around the campus at Washington Square and in the Bronx. Around Washington Square this included the Samuel Rubin International Residence Hall on Fifth Avenue, Brittany Hall on University Place, and residential units at One Fifth Avenue. Faculty housing included Washington Square Village, University Plaza, and at 14 and 15 Washington Place (Frusciano and Petit, 1997, pp. 215-225).

By the end of the 60s, the school was still facing fiscal problems and received 4.2 million dollars in state aid in 1968. Many thought that NYU would only survive this period by becoming part of the State University of New York (SUNY) or City University of New York (CUNY) system. These universities were also a major competitor for NYU, as many students from both New York City and elsewhere opted to attend a SUNY or CUNY over NYU. The declining enrollment only worsened NYU’s fiscal position. Due to these difficulties, the school sold its Bronx campus to CUNY for \$61.9 million dollars. This campus became the campus of Bronx Community College. With this sale, the financial state of the university was improved, and the school became focused on the campus at Washington Square (Frusciano & Petit, 1997, pp. 237- 241).



After the sale of the Bronx campus, and the concentration on the Washington Square Campus, NYU's enrollment increased with both students from around New York and other places. By the 1976-1977 school year the university had overcome its period of unstable finances, and the enrollment was also steadily increasing. This is in part due to the 1976 sale of C.F. Mueller, a pasta company that had been in the school's trust fund, for 115 million dollars. Using this funding the school hired more faculty and improved the academic program, shifting it away from vocational training. In 1980, the number of students attending NYU had increased by eleven percent from the previous five years and the students were also higher performing (Frusciano & Petit, 1997, pp. 248- 249).

Above: NYU Expansion up to 1999

With financial stability, increasing enrollment, and fundraising efforts, the school began a period of rapid expansion. In 1984, the school launched a billion-dollar campaign, which included academic program expansions, hiring new professors and a \$600 million dollar building and renovation program. Forty percent of applications to the school between 1981 and 1987 were of prospective students from outside of the New York Metropolitan area. Which meant there was a new demand for student housing. Residence halls built during the 1980s include 240 Mercer, D'Agostino Hall on West 3rd Street, Seventh Street Residence, and residence halls at 33 and 75 Third Avenue (Frusciano & Petit 1997, p. 254). The latter two, both located in the East Village, were met with resistance from local residents. People feared the impact these developments could have on their cost of living, quality of life and worried they would change the neighborhood's character. Both of them were quite large, one being 18 stories high, to accommodate 474 students, twice as tall as something a non-university developer could have built. The other, larger building was planned to accommodate 1,000 students (Greer, 1985). Both of these buildings were completed and still serve as dorms today. NYU also operates other dorms within the East Village. One of these dorms is the Second Street Residence hall. The description of this dorm states that "Second Street is a dynamic community located in the unique and vibrant East Village" (New York University, n.d.-b) . This demonstrates how the traditional characteristics of the East Village are used by NYU in its advertising. Yet, the University's developments within the area are out of scale compared to the rest of the neighborhood, demonstrating the school's lack of concern for the community.

**N.Y.U. Faces Resistance in the East Village**

**They May Be Ivory Towers But They Still Raise Concern**

By WILLIAM R. GREER

For many years, New York University has been carving a changing out of the neighborhood of brownstones and brick walk-up apartments that served it in Greenwich Village. With recent purchases of two large blocks on Third Avenue for new dormitories and a costly plan on West 3rd Street for new dormitories and a charity shop, the university has whittled out the windows again. They have searched to great what they see as the university's invasion into their community. Residents protesting "Stop N.Y.U." have been posted in windows. Community leaders have said university officials that they are concerned about the size of the proposed dorms, that they are concerned about the graduate students and to be in the area. The other, the 18-story building, will have 474 beds. The other, the 18-story building, will have 474 beds. The other, the 18-story building, will have 474 beds.

**N.Y.U. properties in the Washington Square area**

- Land or building owned 20 years or more.
- Land or building owned less than 20 years.
- Current or planned construction.
- 1) New dormitory, under construction.
- 2) Conversion of two-story underground building under construction.
- 3) Conversion of three-story underground building under construction.
- 4) Rehabilitation of academic facilities at Yeshiva University under construction.
- 5) Planned dormitory.
- 6) Planned dormitory.

Washington Square Park into a dormitory. N.Y.U. says it will be able to build 1,000 underground dormitory. N.Y.U. opponents contend that the university is establishing on its own residential expansion since its founding in 1827. They say that N.Y.U. has routinely ignored the complaints of neighbors when they challenge its plans. The Cooks, at the board believe that "N.Y.U. really they think they should do what is best for N.Y.U."

Some critics question whether a university should receive special treatment before and tax benefits. And they say that N.Y.U.'s actions raise serious concerns over the role of non-profit institutions in Manhattan.

From the "Times" columnist writes on cities and urban planning, and in an interview that supports its statements here "special advantages, and just tax advantages."

They have the advantage of being well-organized and getting away with it all day. They always make it a point that they are in it for the public good and not for profit. They see their own interests as paramount to any other interests. Further as they make bad neighbors, and they officials, it's because what they can get away with that nobody else can.

Many East Village residents fear that N.Y.U. is attempting to take over the housing problem in their neighborhood. They contend they already changed significantly in the past 15 years. Young, college-educated, middle-class people have been attracted to the neighborhood between First Avenue and Third Avenue. N.Y.U. is now a poor dormitory, forcing on many more low-income and working-class people.

Not everyone is fighting the university. Sitting on a group in front of the walk-up next to N.Y.U.'s entry on 9th Street, a man with thinning gray hair and a worn and faded smile said that he had lived there 23 years and paid \$28 a month in rent. Stopping N.Y.U., he said, would end his life. Instead, it would mean that the university of students in New York City and their concerns. "People are saying they're going to push me out of my way."



Above: 1985 New York Times article detailing NYU's plans for expansion.

Above: Photos of dorms discussed in 1985 article, photo taken in May

Source: William Greer, New York Times



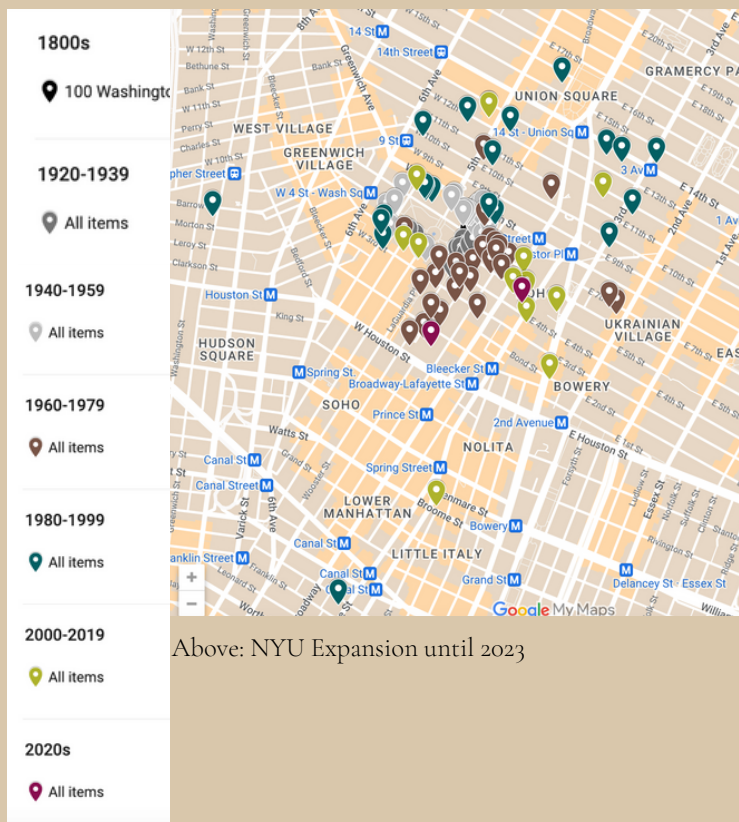


Above: Palladium nightclub. Source: Village Preservation



Above: NYU Palladium Hall Dorm. Photo taken May 2023

Throughout the 90s, the University continued to expand, acquiring several buildings for both academic and dorm use. In 1997, the school acquired a building at 636 Greenwich Street, which it claimed would be used to temporarily house students. Community members feared that it would be used as permanent student housing (Allon, 1997). As of 2023, Greenwich Hall, located at 636 Greenwich Street, is still advertised as a residence hall (New York University, n.d.-c). Another major development during this period was the Palladium Hall, which currently houses 960 students (New York University, n.d.-d). The name comes from the famous nightclub that stood on the site before the dorm was built in 1998. This nightclub had opened in the 80s, and was constructed out of a building that housed a movie theater and concert venue (“POSTINGS: 16-Story”, 1998). NYU uses the name of the earlier nightclub in order to market their dorm, despite there being no architectural remnants of it. This is an example of how NYU sells itself using the historical and cultural significance of the neighborhoods it is located in, while simultaneously destroying those very characteristics.



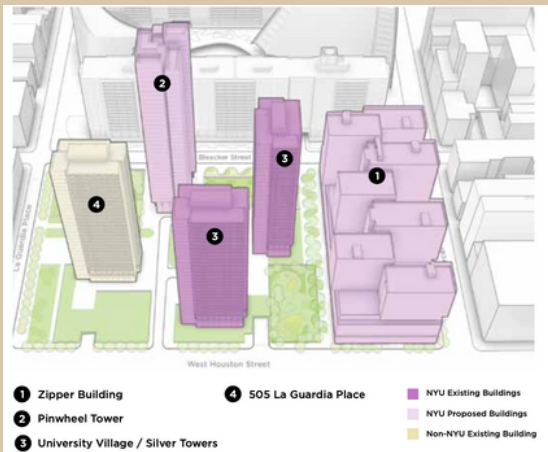
Above: NYU Expansion until 2023

The school continued to increase its footprint in the Village and the surrounding neighborhoods in the 21st century. They also began expanding in downtown Brooklyn after merging with the Polytechnic Institute in 2008. The two schools became known as the NYU Tandon School of Engineering (Van Gelder, 2018). The school also started to position itself as a “Global Network University”, with educational and research facilities around the world, and degree granting campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai (New York University, n.d. -e). The school’s rapid growth since the 1970s, and switch from commuter school to one of students living on campus, which it claims makes future expansion also necessary. In total between 1990 and 2005 the school’s student body increased by 24.5%. By 2005, the school housed 12,500 students; in 1995 this number was 4,843. Plans for this future expansion were outlined in the NYU 2031 plan, which was released in 2008 (New York University, 2008).

# NYU 2031 Plan

NYU’s 2031 plan proposed adding 6 million square feet of space to the school’s campus. This would be in both what NYU considers the core campus, the area around Washington Square Park, as well as satellite campuses in Downtown Brooklyn, on Governors Island and in their “health corridor” along the east side. Within the core campus, an additional 2 million square feet of space was proposed.

In the report, different locations within the core campus are evaluated for possible development, many of which the school already owned and had limited opportunities for redevelopment, or additional development. The area which presented the most significant opportunity for development was the two large superblocks known as Washington Square Village and University Village. These buildings were constructed during urban renewal, using the “tower in the park” modernist style of building. This model of development was created by the architect Le Corbusier and is characterized by tall buildings surrounded by large pieces of open space. The large open space left between the structures was viewed as a development opportunity for the university, and the report included a comprehensive plan for what the proposed developments would be (New York University 2008, 141-143).



Above: Proposed Plan for University Village Superblock. Source: NYU 2031 plan

On the University Village superblock, which has three towers, (also known as Silver Towers), the school proposed two additional structures. One was a fourth tower, “the pinwheel tower”, and another building called “the zipper building”. The fourth tower would add space for additional faculty housing and a university hotel for visiting scholars. The zipper building would be a mixed use structure running along Mercer street with businesses in its ground floor, including a Supermarket. The rest of the building would be additional student residential and academic space and replace the pre-existing athletic recreational space (New York University 2008, 151-155).



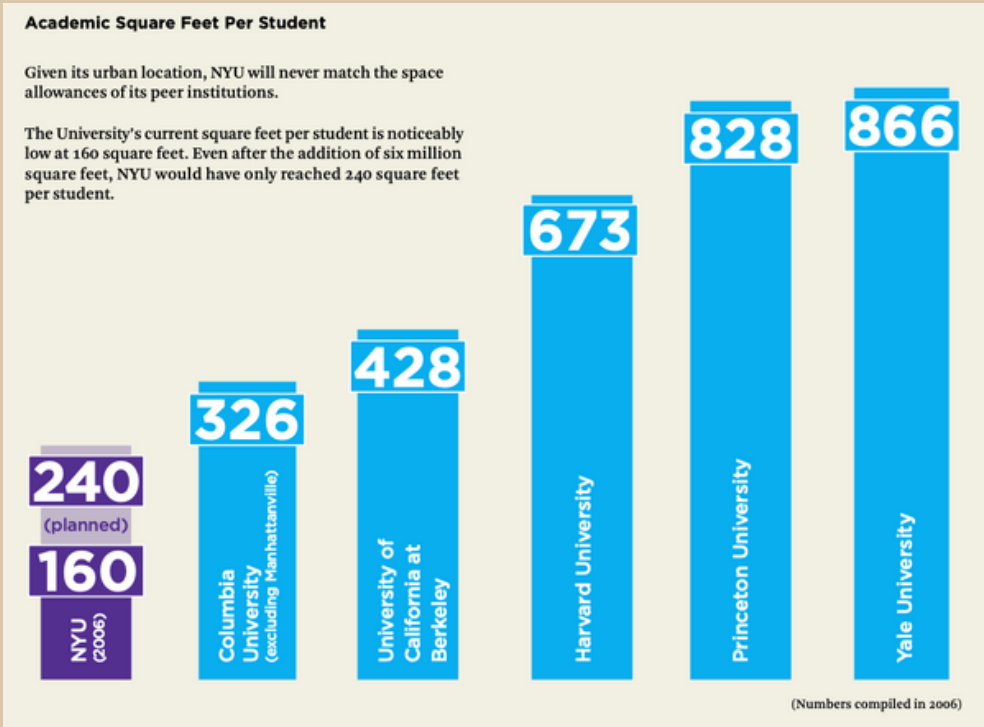
Above: Proposed development on Washington Square Village superblock. Source: NYU 2031 Report

The other superblock, Washington Square Village, is located across the street from University Village. The university also details plans for expansion of these grounds, with the aim of creating a new NYU centered outdoor space. On this superblock, the school proposes building two additional boomerang shaped structures, above ground, and a new space below ground. In the center of these spaces there would be a “light garden” which is meant to bring light to the proposed underground space (New York University 2008, 165-173).



While the bulk of the proposed developments exist on these two superblocks, other blocks were also highlighted for possible development within the core district. This included a new center for academic spiritual life, on Washington Square South between Thompson and Laguardia Place (New York University 2008, 130). This building was completed in 2012 (Architizer, n.d.). Other developments proposed for new buildings were east of the park, and included what is referred to as a student services block, and the Kimbell Block (New York University 2008, 128). The other proposed developments within the core area were mainly renovations of buildings already occupied by NYU. Many of these blocks are already heavily developed, and do not offer the same open space as the two super blocks, Washington Square Village and University Village.

The university argues this expansion is necessary for a multitude of reasons. For one, the school’s rapid increase in student population over the recent decades places them behind other major universities in terms of square footage per student. At the time the report was released, the school had an average of 160 square feet per student, and proposed that with this expansion the number would be increased to 240 square feet. It compared this figure to other universities such as Columbia, which averaged 326 square feet per student, as well UC Berkeley, Harvard, Princeton and Yale. Yale had the highest square footage per student with an average of 866 square feet. The report does recognize that the urban campus of NYU makes having that many square feet per student impossible, and that even with proposed developments the school would still be behind its competitors. New York University believes it must expand in order to properly compete to attract talent. All of the schools it compares itself to have a more typical college campus with a quad, and all besides Columbia are in much less dense cities. While NYU recognizes it can never have the square footage as the other schools, it has successfully become the largest private college in the United States even without the same facilities (New York University 2008, 70). Arguably, the same thing that limits NYU’s geographical expansion is what has allowed it to get so large: New York City, and even more specifically, Greenwich Village.



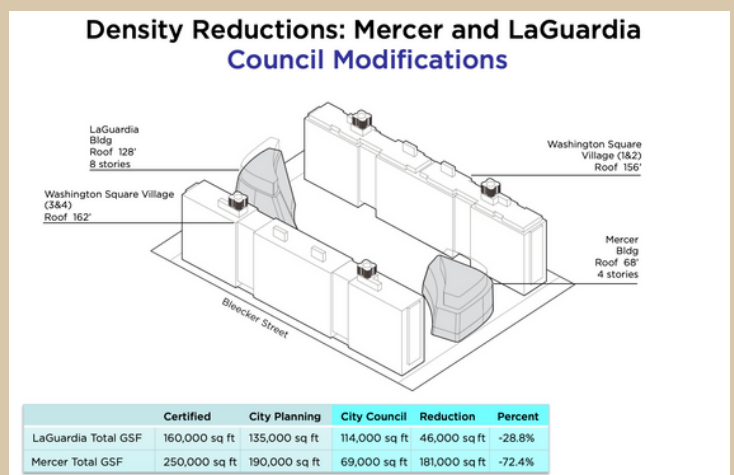
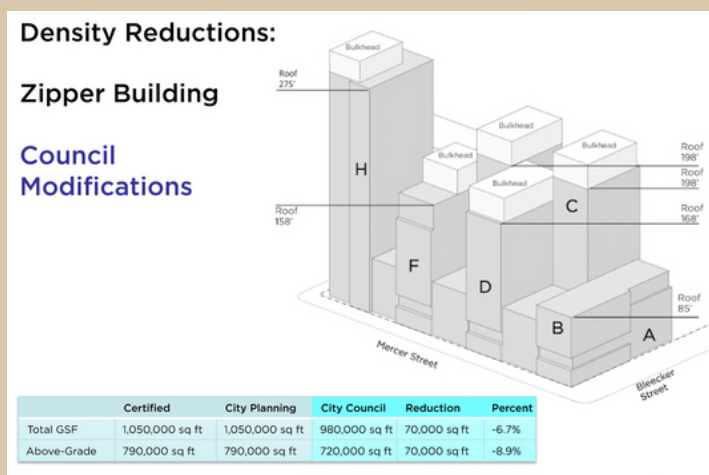
Left: Graphic from NYU 2031 report that demonstrates NYU's square footage per student compared to other schools

# Response to 2031 Plan

Community members were generally opposed to the 2031 plan, which is also referred to as the Core Plan, and Manhattan Community board 2, which includes Washington Square Park and the areas around it, unanimously voted against the plan (Williams 2016). Residents feared that it was this plan would continue to alter the traditional character of the neighborhood, favor the use of the area as a college campus rather than residential neighborhood, reduce the amount of affordable housing in the area and loss of access to open space (Manhattan Community Board 2 2022, 20).

One of the main concerns about the plan is the proposed development on the superblocks and how it would impact access to green space. The tower in the park model that these superblocks follow are characterized by large buildings surrounded by open space. A New York Times article from March 2012, written by Michael Kimmelman, a long term Village resident, heavily advocated against the development on the Washington Square Village Super Block, but supported the redevelopment of the Gymnasium building on the University Village Block. Also requesting that the Sasaki Garden, located between the two Washington Village towers, be opened to the public. Notably, the proposed plan would ultimately destroy this garden but create open space woven in with the new buildings. Kimmelman argued that these buildings be completely eliminated from the plan, supporting the proposed underground classrooms if it involves lowering the park to street level and making it accessible to community members, writing, “make the whole thing a gift from the university to the neighborhood from which the school draws so much of its marketing muscle” (Kimmelman 2012). Today open space is still a problem for community members; according to the fiscal year 2023 summary for Manhattan District 2 needs, residents on;y have 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents (Manhattan Community Board 2, 2022, 23).

Despite community opposition, the plan was passed in July 2012 by the City Council with some modifications. These modifications included over a 20% reduction overall in the proposed square footage of the plan, community access to future facilities, and additional access to the open space on the superblocks. This included allowing the public to access the Sasaki Garden on the Washington Square Village Superblock (New York University n.d.-f.). Another significant concession included a 100,000 square foot public school on the land, known as the “Bleecker school”, which the community board is currently requesting the DOE to help request and help organize (Manhattan Community Board 2, 10).



Above: Density reductions made to original plan. Source: NYU Core Plan Overview



Then Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, not only supported the plan, but expressed concerns about the plan to reduce it. Historically, Bloomberg has been a major supporter of NYU's expansion, working with the school to expand to Brooklyn (Chaban 2012a). Scott Stringer, then Manhattan Borough President, had helped reduce the plan's size, but some community members were not satisfied by how much (Chaban 2012b). Councilwoman Margaret Chin had also worked to reduce the plan's size, including removing 770,000 square feet from the proposed Mercer street zipper building, and reducing the size of the boomerang structures, taking one from eleven stories down to four (Fishbein 2012).

There was also criticism of the plan from within the University. Many faculty members criticized the then University President, John Sexton, for this proposed expansion. A group of twenty university professors, known as "Faculty Against the Sexton Plan" regularly sent emails to a listserv of more than 400 faculty members, which highlighted the shortcomings of Sexton's leadership, as well as advocating against the proposed expansion (Aviv 2013). Eventually this culminated in a vote of "no confidence" from the faculty regarding Sexton's leadership (Kaminer 2013). In a 2013 New York Times op-ed, several faculty members expressed their fears on what repercussions the plan could have. One problem they noted was that NYU does not have the largest endowment, and is largely tuition driven. With an estimated cost of six billion the writers of the op-ed were concerned about how the plan would be funded. They suggested the possibility of increased tuition, more students or bigger class sizes. Other criticisms came from the proposed development within the superblocks, as many of the faculty, about 40%, reside within them. The plan required years of construction, would forever tamper the green space in the buildings and could potentially block light within their apartments (Davis et al. 2013). One professor and member of the senate, Rebecca Karl described Sexton's mission as "imperial", and the development of satellite campuses as being "Not idea capitals, but capitals of capital". Other faculty concerns related to an overall reduction in faculty power, and the high pay for university administrators (Aviv, 2013).



Left: Projection on to NYU's Bobst library protesting the 2031 Plan, from the Faculty against Sexton Plan.  
Source: Village Preservation

NYU Faculty Against Sexton, and a myriad of community groups sued several city and state agencies over the approval of the 2031 Plan (Johnston 2012). During this lawsuit a total of six claims were made, five of which were overturned by the judge. The one claim not overturned involves the status of various pieces of land, and whether or not they are parkland. During this time university President Sexton had created a committee in order to analyze the proposed expansion plan. This group was made up of faculty, students and administrators. This group, also known as the University Space Priorities Working Group (USPWG), spent 18 months analyzing the proposed plan. They found that development of the University Village Superblock on the site of the gym, also known as 181 Mercer, was appropriate (New York University, n.d. - f). They decided to put off all other proposed development, including that on the Washington Square Village Superblock, for another nine years (Aziz, 2013). The lawsuit ruling did not impact the 181 Mercer Street building allowing the university to move forward with the development (New York University, 2014).

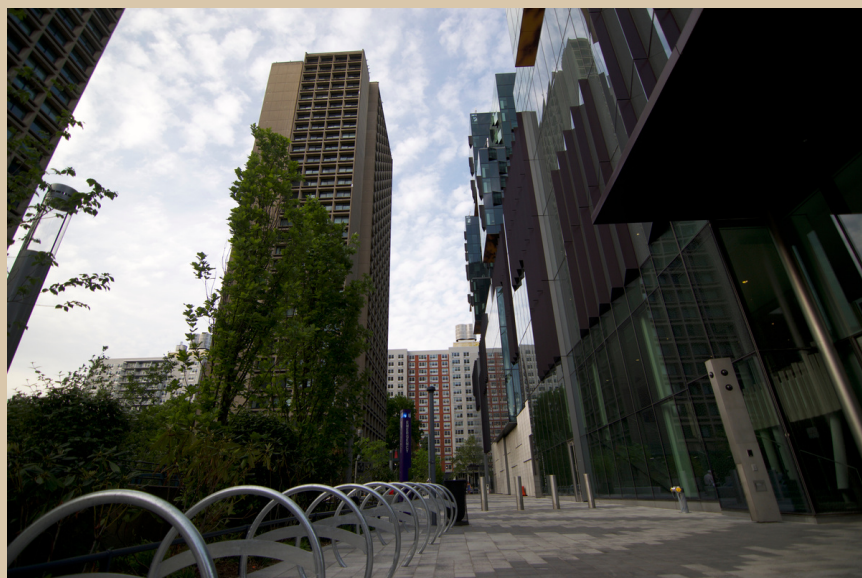


Above: 181 Mercer street, photo taken May 2023

181 Mercer street, also known as the Paulson Center, is scheduled to open as a dorm in Fall 2023 (New York University, n.d.-g). Several of its other parts, including athletic facilities and atrium, were opened in January of 2023. The school is currently looking for a community based non-profit organization to lease the bottom floor of the center, as part of the community dedicated space which was described in the modified plan for city council (New York University, n.d.-h).



Above: Mercer street Paulson center at 181 Mercer is on left, Washington Square Village on the right

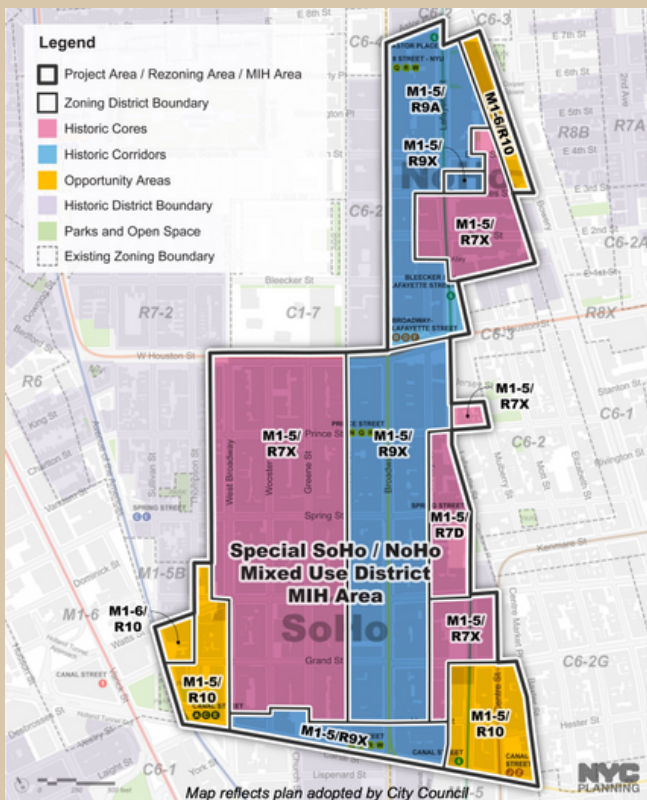


Above: Walkway/ Plaza behind Paulson Center on University Village superblock



# SoHo-NoHo Rezoning

More recently, NYU was involved in a lawsuit with the city over an amendment to the SoHo-NoHo rezoning plan that prohibits college, university and dorm uses in the newly rezoned area (NYC Planning, 2021). The case was dismissed in May 2023 (Village Preservation 2023). The SoHo-NoHo rezoning plan was passed through the City Council in late 2021. The goal of this rezoning is to update decades old zoning laws as a way to increase housing and strengthen mixed use development. The zoning laws were decades old, still reflecting the area's previous life as a manufacturing district (NYC Planning, 2021). With the new zoning, developers would be able to build new market-rate and affordable housing through the city's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program (NYC Planning, 2021). The MIH was originally enacted in 2016, and required that a certain percentage of housing in new residential, developments, enlargements or conversions to residential within MIH areas be permanently affordable (NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, n.d.).



Above: Map of SoHo-NoHo rezoning. Source: NYC planning

Prior to the case's dismissal, the university argued that this amendment is unconstitutional, violating the Cornell Doctrine which states residential areas are barred from excluding educational uses. According to the lawsuit, NYU currently owns or leases seven buildings within the newly rezoned area (Moniz, 2023). The amendment was made in part because NYU is not required to comply with the MIH program (Village Preservation n.d.). As explained above, only residential developments, or conversions to residential, are required to comply. While NYU operates many dormitories, these developments do not have to comply with these rules as they are not for typical residential use. It should be noted that the SoHo-NoHo rezoning has been generally unpopular within Manhattan CB2, with the Community Board voting 36-1 against it. Prior to the City Council amendment, dorm use within the rezoned area was also a major concern for Manhattan CB 2 (Manhattan Community Board 2, n.d.). Although the lawsuit has been dismissed, the fact NYU filed the case demonstrates its further desire to expand.

# Economic Influence of NYU

A major argument made by NYU for why it should be allowed to expand is the economic role it plays in New York City. As of 2023, it has a total of 19,000 employees making it one of the largest employers in New York City (New York University, n.d.-a). According to the 2008, “NYU 2031” report, 65% of NYU graduates continue to live in New York City. Also based on the 2031 report, each student spends an estimated \$750 per month within New York City, adding to a total of \$14.9 million dollars spent among students each month (New York University 2008, 15). Both NYU faculty and students regularly visit local businesses such as restaurants, bars, clubs and theaters (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 2013, 22). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the neighborhood lost a significant portion of its population as NYU students were not on campus. Several local businesses struggled, and were relieved when the students returned to school (Dhadda 2021). This demonstrates that NYU’s population is part of the Village’s economy, but it creates a substantial non-permanent population which brings its own problems.

## Conclusion

Over the last century, NYU’s expansion has displaced hundreds of local residents, and the school currently owns the majority of property around Washington Square Park. There is a long history of residents fighting these proposed developments, and community members feared their neighborhood, which was once filled with artists and local residents, would become a campus filled with students. Community members have expressed concerns that the school’s new developments would jeopardize the neighborhood’s historic architecture. The irony is that the characteristics the local residents have fought for are the very attributes NYU uses to advertise itself.

NYU regularly markets itself as a “campus without walls”, meaning the city, and especially the area around Washington Square Park, is the school’s campus. One NYU tour video even describes the park as the university’s “quad” (Meet NYU, 2016). Local historic architectural features are commonplace in NYU’s advertisements, which is something many community members also advocate for. Cafes and restaurants are frequented by local residents as well as university students and faculty. If the Village lacked many of these aspects, cherished by both longtime residents and NYU’s population, the University would have likely never been able to exist in the manner it has. As recognized in the school’s 2031 report, NYU lacks the traditional sprawling suburban college campus that many other universities have. The university argues that in order to compete with other schools, it must be allowed to expand within its core neighborhood. The problem is, NYU needs to recognize that the way it has expanded, and the proposed future expansions, will ultimately destroy the neighborhood that it needs to market itself. Essentially, NYU has been able to become so successful, even without much space, because of the neighborhoods and the city it is located in.



General opposition to NYU's expansion has come from community members, NYU faculty and even students. An article in the NYU student newspaper, *Washington Square News*, released in late April 2023, "‘Manifest destiny’: NYU's history of expansion in Washington Square", gives an overview of NYU's growth, its problems, and its opponents (Moniz, 2023). This opposition likely comes from the fact that NYU students have chosen NYU not because of the school's facilities, which greatly lag behind those of their competitors, but because of its location in the middle of Greenwich Village. These students likely do not want the typical college campus experience, they want to live in Greenwich Village, and they understand how NYU's expansion is impacting the neighborhood.

In order for NYU to be NYU, it needs the Village to be the Village. The university consistently advertises the city when advertising itself. For instance, the "University Life" tab on the school's website reads:

Albeit untraditional, NYU is primarily located in Manhattan's Greenwich Village and downtown Brooklyn where there's no doubt that the neighborhoods feel like a community. Many of NYU's academic and administrative buildings and freshman residence halls border Washington Square Park. The sidewalks are full of students on their way to class, and members of the NYU community fill the restaurants, shops, and other businesses. Both on campus and off, the people of NYU are directly involved in the day-to-day excitement, culture, and opportunity of the city that serves as a very real extension of NYU's campus and classrooms.

Source: New York University, n.d.-i

Similar sentiments are shared in the descriptions of their various housing options. For instance, the description for Lafayette Hall reads: "The 80 Lafayette Street Residence Hall is located on the border between Chinatown and TriBeCa, an area rich in architectural beauty. The hall is in close proximity to the culturally significant neighborhoods of City Hall, Chinatown, Little Italy and trendy SoHo" (New York University, n.d.-j). Nearly all of the 20 residence halls reference the historically significant and famous characteristics of the neighborhoods in which they are located. A handful of them even directly reference the significant architecture of them (New York University, n.d.-k). This is a somewhat ironic fact, coming after decades of preservation-related battles between NYU and the Village.

Arguably, NYU has already destroyed many of the characteristics the Village is famous for. Greenwich Village is widely considered to be an artistic and cultural center for New York City, and quite possibly the entire United States of America. Throughout the 20th century it was home to many artists and the center of many important social movements (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 2013, 3). The larger university developments throughout the 20th century replaced entire blocks that once housed artists, families and other community members. These local streets were replaced with a myriad of buildings that are for the most part not accessible to community members. It is important to look at what NYU has replaced, and what they will continue to replace with future expansion. NYU recognizes that it will never be able to have the same facilities as other elite private institutions. What it has is Greenwich Village. And the school's expansions that harm the Village will ultimately harm NYU. The school needs to better recognize what Greenwich Village is, and how as a neighborhood, rather than a college campus, it better serves the community, students, faculty and whoever else wants to enjoy it.

## Note on sources in Maps

The information in the map's come from NYC Planning Zola Map, ACRIS and DOB BIS. LPC designation reports for the NoHo, Greenwich Village and South Village historic districts. A 1996, archived New York University map webpage, archived News Articles in the New York Times Times Machine, and the books, "New York University and the City: an Illustrated History" by Thomas J Frusciano & Marilyn H. Pettit, and "It Happened on Washington Square" by Emily Kies Folpe.

It should also be noted that the map does not nearly include ever property owned by NYU. It excludes all of those in the health corridor on the east side of Manhattan, and in Downtown Brooklyn. There were also three buildings in the core campus which years of acquisition could not The map can viewed using by clicking [here](#).

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