DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
CITY OF NEW YORK

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW DIVISION

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Department of City Planning

April 22, 2011

POSITIVE DECLARATION

Project Identification
NYU Core
CEQR No. 11DCP121M
ULURP Nos. Pending
SEQRA Classification: Type I

Lead Agency
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007
Contact: Robert Dobruskin
(212) 720-3423

Name, Description and Location of Proposal:

NYU Core

The applicant, New York University (NYU), is seeking a number of discretionary actions (the "Proposed Actions") in connection with a proposed expansion of NYU facilities at NYU's academic core near Washington Square in Manhattan, Community District 2. The project area for the Proposed Actions includes: a "Proposed Development Area," bounded by LaGuardia Place to the west, Mercer Street to the east, West Houston Street to the south, and West Third Street to the north,[1] where substantial new development is proposed on two superblocks as part of NYU's master plan; a "Commercial Overlay Area," bounded by Washington Square East and University Place to the west, Mercer Street to the east, West Fourth Street to the south, and the northern boundary of the existing R7-2 zoning district near East 8th Street to the north,[2] where the Proposed Actions would permit greater flexibility in ground-floor retail uses, and are expected to result in limited conversion of ground-floor uses in existing buildings to retail use; and a "Block 535 Demapping Area," where no new development is proposed, but where NYU seeks to acquire the property that contains its 251 Mercer Street cogeneration facility below-grade.

[1] The Proposed Development Area includes: Block 524, Lots 1, 9, and 66; Block 533, Lots 1 and 10; and portions of Mercer Street and LaGuardia Place that are proposed to be demapped.

[2] The Commercial Overlay Area includes: Block 546, Lots 1, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15, 20, 21, 26, 30; Block 547, Lots 1, 4, 5, 8, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, and 25; and Block 548, Lots 1, 4, 21, 24, 40, and 45.

The proposed actions would facilitate a proposal by the applicant to construct the following developments in the Proposed Development Area, over approximately 19 years:

- Four new NYU buildings that would include academic uses, residential units for NYU faculty and students, a new athletic facility, a possible University-oriented hotel with ancillary conference/academic space, and retail uses;
- A below-grade academic use spanning the distance between LaGuardia Street and Mercer Streets;
- Approximately four acres of publicly accessible open space;
- An approximately 30,000-gsf temporary gymnasium, which would operate until the opening of the proposed new athletic center;
- Below-grade replacement parking facilities; and
- NYU anticipates making space available to the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) for the provision of an approximately 100,000-square-foot public school.

By 2031, the Proposed Actions would result in the development of approximately 2.5 million gross square feet (gsf) of new uses in the Proposed Development Area. Within the Commercial Overlay Area, it is anticipated that NYU would develop up to approximately 24,000 gsf of neighborhood retail uses in the ground floors of five NYU buildings.

The Proposed Development Area—bounded by LaGuardia Place to the west, Mercer Street to the east, West Houston Street to the south, and West Third Street to the north—is comprised of two superblocks separated by Bleecker Street. The superblock north of Bleecker Street in the Proposed Development Area is referred to as the "North Block," while the superblock south of Bleecker is referred to as the "South Block." Collectively, the North and South Blocks are largely residential in character, with mid- to high-rise apartment buildings, a number of private and public open spaces, and the Coles Sports and Recreation Center, which is an NYU gymnasium/recreational facility. The Proposed Development Area also contains a number of retail uses located along LaGuardia Place, including the Morton-Williams Associated Supermarket.

The Proposed Actions required to facilitate the proposed project are as follows:

- **Zoning map change**: The entire project area is currently zoned R7-2. There is a C1-5 overlay along LaGuardia Street on the two superblocks in the Proposed Development Area, but this is the only location where retail is allowed in the project area (this overlay area contains the Morton Williams Associated Supermarket and the LaGuardia Retail building). NYU proposes to rezone the Proposed Development Area from R7-2 and R7-2/C1-5 to C1-7, and proposes to rezone the Commercial Overlay Area from R7-2 to R7-2/C1-5.

- **Large-Scale General Development (LSGD) Special Permit**: Pursuit of waivers within a proposed LSGD to include the North and South Blocks. The precise boundaries of the LSGD on the South Block are subject to adjustment in order to conform to the scope of

the Proposed Actions. As a consequence of this Proposed Action, the existing Large Scale Residential Development (LSRD) would be dissolved, with the existing waiver(s) incorporated into the new LSGD special permit.

Additional waivers and/or Zoning Resolution text amendments (may include height and setback waivers and potentially floor area and open space redistribution across zoning lot boundary lines, and court and location of use regulations).

- **Demapping and City disposition of portions of the following City streets (See Figure 7):**
  -LaGuardia Place between Bleecker and West Third Streets;
  -Mercer Street between Houston and Bleecker Streets;
  -Mercer Street between Bleecker and West Third Streets; and
  -Mercer Street between West Third and West Fourth Streets.

- **Elimination of New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Deed Restrictions on Blocks 524 and 533**
- **Potential funding or financing approvals from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY)**
- **Public Authorities Law Site Selection by the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA)**
- **New York City Department of Transportation revocable consent for utility lines beneath City streets**

In addition to the above-described Proposed Actions, on March 3, 2011 NYU submitted an application to the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) for a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) for proposed changes to landscaping at University Village, which is a New York City Landmark (NYCL). At a public hearing on April 5, 2011, LPC approved the proposed landscape changes.

For the purposes of the analysis, there are two analysis years – the first is 2021, at which point approximately half of the total development (approximately 1.3 million gsf) is expected to be constructed and operational. The second analysis year is 2031, when the entire proposed development program is expected to be complete. The applicant has stated that absent the proposed actions, in 2021 there would be no new development within the Proposed Development Area. Within the Commercial Overlay Area, with or without the Proposed Actions, NYU plans to develop an additional 20,000 gsf of academic uses at 25 West Fourth Street. Also within the Commercial Overlay Area at 15 Washington Place, NYU plans a renovation and building addition that would convert the approximately 74,000-gsf residential building into a 129,000-sf academic building. The future condition without the Proposed Actions in 2031 assumes that the site of the existing Morton Williams supermarket would be redeveloped as-of-right and would contain an approximately 25,000-square-foot supermarket and NYU academic space.

Construction of the proposed project would commence in 2013, contingent upon approval of the proposed discretionary actions, and would last approximately 19 years.

Statement of Significant Effect:
On behalf of the CPC, the Environmental Assessment and Review Division has determined, pursuant to 6 NYCRR Part 617.7, that the proposed action may have a significant effect on the quality of the environment as detailed in the following environmental impacts, and that an environmental impact statement will be required:

1. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts related to land use, zoning, and public policy in the vicinity of the affected area.

2. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts related to socioeconomic conditions in the vicinity of the affected area.

3. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts to community facilities in the study area.

4. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on publicly accessible open space in the vicinity of the affected area.

5. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse shadow impacts in the vicinity of the affected area.

6. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources in the affected area.

7. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources in the vicinity of the affected area.

8. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on natural resources in the vicinity of the affected area.

9. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts related to hazardous materials in the vicinity of the affected area.

10. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on water and sewer infrastructure in the vicinity of the affected area.

11. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on solid waste and sanitation services.

12. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on energy.

13. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts to transportation in the vicinity of the affected area.

14. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts to air quality in the vicinity of the affected area.

15. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts related to greenhouse gases in the vicinity of the affected area.

16. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse noise impacts in the vicinity of the affected area.

17. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts related to public health.

18. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character in the vicinity of the affected area.

19. The action, as proposed, may result in significant adverse construction-related impacts.

Supporting Statement:
The above determination is based on an Environmental Assessment Statement prepared for the action which finds that:

1. Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy - The proposed action would alter existing land uses and zoning by allowing greater densities than the current zoning permits;

2. Socioeconomic Conditions – The proposed action could result in indirect displacement of residential, commercial or institutional uses.

3. Community Facilities – Increased development would increase the number of residents, visitors, and workers using area community facilities and services.

4. Open Space – Changes to the area's open spaces may occur due to increased demand for use of publicly accessible spaces as well as direct effects on existing open spaces.

5. Shadows – The proposed action would allow an increase in development density and greater building heights in the project area. Shadows cast by the proposed buildings could affect publicly accessible open spaces and sunlight-sensitive architectural resources in the study area.

6. Historic and Cultural Resources - The proposed action could affect historic resources in the study area.

7. Urban Design and Visual Resources - The proposed action would result in new building forms which could differ from existing urban design elements in the affected area, and may alter the urban design character and visual resources of the surrounding area.

8. Natural Resources – The proposed action would result in new development which may affect natural resources in the study area.

9. Hazardous Materials - The proposed action would result in new construction and in-ground disturbance which, given the historical on-and off-site uses and conditions, has the potential to result in hazardous materials impacts.

10. Water and Sewer Infrastructure - The proposed action would result in new development within the project area which could place additional demands on infrastructure, including storm water management.

11. Solid Waste and Sanitation – Due to the increase in density and area population, the proposed actions would increase the demands on solid waste and sanitation transport and disposal services.

12. Energy – The proposed actions would result in additional residents, visitors and employees that would increase energy demands in the area.

13. Transportation – The proposed actions would result in an increase in the number of vehicular trips and increase ridership on mass transit facilities. In addition, parking availability may be affected due to the creation of new parking demand. It also would affect pedestrian movements in the area due to the increased number of residents, workers, and visitors.

14. Air Quality – Increased demand for heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and additional vehicular traffic introduced by the proposed action may affect air quality.

15. Greenhouse Gas Emissions – The proposed actions may affect greenhouse gas emissions due to the increased construction and operational activities as a result of the new development.

16. Noise - The proposed actions would increase the volume of traffic in the area, which could result in additional traffic noise and may have the potential to result in stationary source noise impacts.

17. Public Health - The proposed actions would result in new development which could potentially result in public health concerns.

18. Neighborhood Character – The proposed action would result in new mixed-use developments which could alter existing neighborhood character by affecting shadows, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, and noise.

19. Construction - The proposed actions would result in new development over an extended period of time that involves activities which may result in construction-related impacts.

20. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to be prepared for the proposed action will identify and describe any other potential effects on the environment.

Public Scoping:
The CEQR lead agency hereby requests that the applicant prepare or have prepared, at their option, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in accordance with 6 NYCRR 617.9(b) and Sections 6-08 and 6-12 of Executive Order No. 91 of 1977 as amended (City Environmental Quality Review).

A public scoping meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, 2011, and will be held at the New York City Department of City Planning's Spector Hall, 22 Reade Street, New York, New York, 10007. The public meeting will consist of two sessions: one starting at 2 PM; and a second session starting at 6PM. Written comments will be accepted by the lead agency until the close of business on June 6, 2011.

This determination has been prepared in accordance with Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

Should you have any questions pertaining to this Positive Declaration, you may contact the Project Manager, Diane McCarthy, at (212) 720-3417.

Robert Dobruskin

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Environmental Assessment & Review Division
New York City Department of City Planning

4/22/11
Date