



**Comments on the Draft Environmental Review for the NYU Core
Submitted and delivered publicly to Manhattan Community Board 2
January 19, 2012**

For over 100 years, New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P) has built, protected and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. We achieve this mission through an integrated approach of research, advocacy, and strategic partnerships.

We offer the following comments on NYU's plan for campus expansion based on our guiding principles that open spaces should be preserved and well maintained, that resources should be equitably distributed citywide, and that access should be maximized to serve the greatest number of constituencies.

OPEN SPACE: EXPANSION & PRESERVATION

The proposed plan would result in a net increase of 3.13 acres of publicly accessible open space. New Yorkers for Parks supports the plan's goal of expanding and enhancing open space in a densely settled neighborhood lacking in public space compared to many other neighborhoods in the city. NYU's original proposal included the alienation of Mercer Playground (or LMNOP), a small neighborhood playground established by community activists over 20 years ago. We are pleased that NYU has been responsive to our concerns about this important community asset and has changed the plan so that the playground will not only remain in City ownership but will become mapped parkland.

CONSTRUCTION PHASING: IMPACTS ON OPEN SPACE

The community has voiced concerns about how the project's lengthy construction period will impact access to open space. No single area within the site will experience construction impacts over the course of the full build-out period, but it is clearly impossible to fully mitigate the impacts of a large-scale construction project on a neighborhood. Significantly, the current plan ensures that at no time during construction will the site be without an open playground.

It is essential that every effort be made to protect LaGuardia Community Garden during the construction period. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement offers two staging scenarios during the construction of the Bleecker Building Site located adjacent to the garden, and we ask the City and NYU to select the Bleecker Street option, which places construction staging on Bleecker Street rather than on the garden, sidewalk, and LaGuardia Place. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that the garden is sufficiently shored up during construction so that the dirt and roots underneath will not be compromised. We encourage garden members, NYU, and the City to examine similar construction scenarios in the city where protective efforts were undertaken to preserve gardens and their root systems when located adjacent to construction sites.

OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE & USE: ESTABLISHING STANDARDS

According to the plan under consideration, the new publicly accessible open spaces and much of the existing, redesigned open spaces within the two superblocks will be owned and maintained by NYU. Privately owned public spaces often fail to provide adequate access, amenities and maintenance for the public, especially over time. To ensure the long-term maintenance of these new spaces and their enduring public nature, we call on NYU and the City to develop a strong open space maintenance and use agreement as part of this action. We urge all stakeholders engaged in the environmental review process to consider NYU's responsibilities in maintaining these open spaces for the benefit of the public. Specifically, we encourage the parties to establish language ensuring that the proposed open spaces remain public open spaces for the duration of NYU's ownership. Additionally, the agreement should address standards of maintenance; hours of public access; specified reasons, procedures and oversight for temporary closures; procedures for notifying the community

about events, closures, and other activities that will impact the public's use of the spaces; and a dedicated maintenance fund provided by NYU that will be independently monitored to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the open spaces. We encourage the stakeholders to establish a set of enforcement procedures, should NYU fail to comply with the standards outlined in the agreement, and to create an oversight body that includes members from the surrounding community to monitor compliance with such an agreement.

We thank the City and NYU for their responsiveness to date and look forward to continuing to work with them and the community to ensure that the negative impacts of this development are minimized and that adequate controls are put in place to ensure that the open spaces proposed today are as rich a public amenity for future generations as they will be for the very first visitors.