



**Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for NYU 2031
Submitted and delivered publicly to the City Planning Commission
April 25, 2012**

New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P) is the independent research-based organization advocating for quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. We offer the following comments on NYU's 2031 plan based on our guiding principles that public open spaces should serve the greatest number of constituencies, and be preserved and well maintained in perpetuity.

New Yorkers for Parks supports NYU's goal of increasing public open space within this two-block area and making the new open spaces more publicly accessible and welcoming than the current configuration. We commend NYU on making changes to the 2031 plan that improve the public space components, most recently eliminating the temporary gym so that the Mercer Playground will remain untouched and open in its current location until at least 2025. This change, and the previous commitment to map the playground site and several other strips of DOT-owned land as permanent parkland, are important to ensuring short- and long-term public access to these open spaces.

However, we ask NYU to make three additional critical commitments before the project is approved:

- 1) **Preserve LaGuardia Community Garden:** NYU and the City must commit to not staging construction at Bleecker and LaGuardia on the LaGuardia Community

Garden, and to protecting and preserving that garden during any construction that occurs in its proximity.

- 2) **Adopt a stringent maintenance and operations agreement for both the privately-owned and publicly-owned open spaces:** Following the model recently adopted for the St. Vincent's project, the restrictive declaration for this plan should incorporate a detailed agreement that lays out rules for occupancy, hours of access, closure, notification, use and permitting, and requirements for management, maintenance and repair, governance, oversight, compliance and enforcement. And, since the restrictive declaration only applies to the land owned by NYU, this agreement should be mirrored in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NYU and the Parks Department that would apply the same rules and requirements to the publicly-owned strips adjacent to NYU's land, so that the open spaces on these two blocks are, for all intents and purposes, integrated and viewed comprehensively for planning, management, and oversight purposes.

- 3) **Maintain flexibility in the open space design so that the community can participate in the process:** While it is essential that NYU be held accountable for the quantity and quality of public space they develop as part of the 2031 plan, it is also important that the design of the open space not be so proscribed by this process – especially on the northern block, which will not begin construction for more than ten years – that the community does not have an opportunity to weigh in on how the spaces are designed and programmed as the needs of their neighborhood evolve. Certainly we would like to see general design concepts and principles locked in by any plan that is approved by the Commission, but we hope some flexibility is allowed so that the details can be more fully shaped with input from both the community and the governing body that is created as part of the maintenance and operations agreement and charged with overseeing the site's public spaces going forward.

Thank you, Madame Chair, for the opportunity to address the Commission today. New Yorkers for Parks looks forward to working with NYU and the City on the issues I've highlighted today to ensure that the public open spaces created under this plan are accessible to the broad public and well maintained for generations to come.