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COMMUNITY BOARD No. 2, MANHATTAN

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September 23, 2011

Amanda Burden, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chair Burden:

At its Full Board meeting on September 22, 2011, CB#2, Manhattan (CB#2-Man.), adopted the following resolution:

RESOLUTION ON NYU'S RECENT PROPOSAL FOR THE PARK STRIPS ADJACENT TO THE WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE SUPERBLOCKS

WHEREAS, Community Board No. 2, Manhattan ("CB 2"), passed a resolution on November 18, 2010, urging that NYU remove from its development proposals and ULURP application the proposal to acquire four 50-foot-wide strips of city-owned property on the eastern and western edges of their South Village superblocks (the "Park Strips"); and

WHEREAS, in such resolution CB 2 called on the City of New York to transfer the Park Strips from the NYC Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) to the Parks Department in order to guarantee their public use and character in perpetuity, reaffirming a position CB 2 has held for decades; and

WHEREAS, on December 5, 2010, CB 2 held a press conference supporting the preservation of all of the Park Strips with community activists and every local elected official representing the area, including Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, State Senator Tom Duane, State Assembly member Deborah Glick and Councilmember Margaret Chin; and

WHEREAS, on September 15, 2011, NYU announced to the media that it would modify its ULURP plan and propose that two of the Park Strips be transferred from NYCDOT to the Parks Department, but the land beneath said Park Strips would be encumbered by easements to NYU which would allow (i) construction of occupied space under the land, thereby destroying the Park Land strips as they are presently used by the community; (ii) closing of public access during construction and at other times, and (iii) provide for access over the land to NYU facilities; and

WHEREAS, NYU did not work with CB 2 on developing this plan or engage in any substantive conversations about this plan, nor did NYU notify CB 2 of this proposal until the same day as its announcement to the media (although they did consult with other advocacy organizations).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board No. 2, Manhattan, firmly rejects NYU's proposal for the following reasons:

- The easements would allow for long term temporary closing of the two Park Strips;
- There has not been an evaluation of the legal issues pertaining to the proposed transfer of the Park Strips, including the granting of easements below and across the land, and the need to propose alternatives to alienation of these two Park Strips, as well as the others, nor has there been an assessment of the direct or indirect effect of the project on open space, as called for by CB 2 in its response to Draft Scope of Work for CEQR No. 11DCP121M (NYU Core);
- Use of the Park Strips would be in large part dominated by access across the land to NYU campus facilities;
- Large mature trees would need to be removed from the Park Strips and the land would not be appropriate for planting of large species trees because of the built space below; and
- All new open space included in the proposal, while publicly accessible, will be inward facing with a "university campus" look and feel -- not befitting the character of the community -- which makes the preservation of the Park Strips even more important.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB 2 admonishes NYU for not discussing the issue of the Park Strips with CB 2 prior to its announcement to the media, which regrettably could be interpreted as a cynical attempt by NYU to manipulate the wider public, and urges NYU going forward to engage in good faith discussions with CB 2 and the community on strategies to transfer all four of the Park Strips to the Parks Department and preserve them in a manner that comports with their significance to the local community as much used and cherished public open space.

Vote: Unanimous, with 40 Board members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Brad Hoylman, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan

BH/gh

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Thomas K. Duane, NY State Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Member
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member
Sandy Myers, CB2 liaison, Man. Borough President's office
William T. Castro, Man. Boro. Commissioner, NYC DPR
Margaret Forgione, Manhattan Boro. Commissioner, NYC DOT
Alicia Hurley, Vice President, NYU Gov't Affairs and Community Engagement
Pauline Yu, CAU