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September 2, 2008

Alicia Hurley
Vice President for Government Affairs & Community Engagement
New York University
70 Washington Square South, Room 1207
New York, NY 10012

Re: NYU Proposals for Development on the Silver Towers Superblock

Dear Ms. Hurley,

NYU has recently announced its intention to consider building one or more 40-story buildings on the Silver Towers superblock. The university has focused attention on a site at the northern end of the plaza near Bleecker Street, directly in line with the Wooster Street view corridor. This has raised strong concerns regarding the appropriateness of such new construction at this location. It also raises several important questions regarding how such development would comply with various zoning requirements for the site, and meet commitments NYU has previously made to provide certain amenities on the site.

In light of this, I ask for NYU's responses to the following questions:

- What sort of zoning changes or variances would be required for NYU to build the proposed structure?
- What sort of deed restrictions exist on the property that would need to be changed or lifted in order to allow such a project to move forward?
- The urban renewal restrictions for the Silver Towers superblock prohibit the type of additional construction being proposed; therefore how would such construction be possible?
- NYU received a variance and several special approvals for the construction of the Coles Gym in 1979 because construction of the new building violated zoning requirements for the site. In order to get these approvals, NYU had to agree that the rooftop of the Coles Gym would be accessible to residents of the superblock as a substitute for the "open space" required by the zoning. NYU also had to agree to allow residents of the superblock access to and use of the gym for a certain number of hours per week. Additionally, NYU had to agree to provide and maintain a dog run on the Mercer Street side of the property. How would NYU's new construction proposals conform with these agreements and to the zoning requirements for the site?
- How would the proposed new construction conform to the square footage limits allowed by zoning for the superblock? The zoning for the superblock allows 6.5 FAR for community facility uses, but only a maximum of 3.44 FAR for residential uses. Following a change in the zoning text in 2003 which made faculty housing a residential rather than

a community facility use group under the zoning, all three towers in the complex are now considered residential, rather than community facilities, under the zoning. What use would NYU anticipate in any new construction, given that this would likely determine whether or not any new construction would even be allowable under the zoning?

- How would NYU satisfy the rather substantial “open space” requirements of the superblock’s R-72 zoning with any new construction?
- What would NYU do with the supermarket currently located on the northwest corner of the superblock, and what would NYU do with the site currently occupied by the supermarket?
- The conversion of the “green strips” along LaGuardia Place and Mercer and Bleecker Streets to permanent park space has been consistently opposed by NYU, resulting in the City’s refusal to move forward with this request. How would NYU’s development plans impact the green strips and NYU’s opposition to their being transferred to the Parks Department?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,


Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: NYU Community Task Force