

The NYU Effect:

The Change of Washington Square Village Over Time

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New York University, once known as the University of the City of New York, was founded in 1831. In 1835, the university built its permanent home right on Washington Square East with the purchase of their first building. This was to be the start of a new university, one meant for the non-elites as there was a new growing mercantile class that existed within New York City. Prior to the foundation of NYU, the neighborhood surrounding Washington Square, the West Village and Greenwich Village, that the university chose to reside in, had a community of its own. This paper will explore the original history of the area surrounding Washington Square Park, once known as “Little Africa,” and how NYU influenced the change of the area including the opposition faced by the local community and student voices. With an increase of student enrollment NYU had a need for expansion in student housing and educational facilities, leading the university to purchase and build property such as the Judson Hotel and Bobst as well as participate in slum clearances that displaced the local community. This history of expansion is one that will be further expanded with the university’s future expansion plans such as NYU Core Plan and NYU 2031 plan.

Before the Dutch arrived in Manhattan in 1624, establishing the island as a trading port, the southwest area of the West Village was occupied by native people called the Lenape as there was Minetta Creek which provided access to fishing. These people are said to have lived within the area for over 6,500 years prior to the Dutch arriving but many died with the arrival of the Dutch mainly due to the diseases that were brought over from Europe.<sup>1</sup> In 1643, the Dutch gave slaves plots of land to farm crops. These slaves were still considered “half-slaves” as they freedom was not definite, and they were required to give a certain number of livestock and crops back to the Dutch each year. In 1645, Manuel Trumpeter and Anthony Portuguese, two half-free

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<sup>1</sup> Meaghan. “Remembering the Original New Yorkers.” Village Preservation, November 26, 2014. <https://www.villagepreservation.org/2014/11/26/remembering-the-original-new-yorkers/>.

slaves responsible for farming most of the area that is Washington Square Park today, were given a land grant that had a familiar parcel.<sup>2</sup> Only few half-free slaves received land in this way, and few were able to keep it as there had to be annual fees paid on the land. This farmland that remained within the hands of these families was passed down through generations, resulting in the area being known as the “Land of the Blacks” and later simply called “Little Africa” as the community grew larger in the 20th century.<sup>3</sup>

The establishment of Washington Square Park in 1826 caused the surrounding neighborhood to grow, inviting many wealthy people. Throughout this time, the neighborhood did not have a good reputation as they believed the area was dangerous, mostly due to racist opinions had by these wealthier people coming into the neighborhood. “Black and Tan” saloons, a place for interracial socializing, were popular within the area with but some people did not like these saloons. In the late 1800s, the south side of the park, still regarded as “Little Africa,” began to house many immigrants including Cubans and Puerto Rican. As these immigrants integrated into American culture, they were faced with racism, especially those who were visibly perceived to be from African descent. Those who “understood themselves to be brown rather than black... faced the special challenge of accommodating themselves to the potentially unfamiliar ways that New Yorkers perceived them.”<sup>4</sup>

Many of these people found that turning to African Americans, white Cubans or sometimes only to each other as they all who understood what they experienced, was helpful to navigating the new area. Many of these immigrants found housing within African American areas, especially within the southern part of Greenwich Village and the Tenderloin (Thompson

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<sup>2</sup> “The Men Who Farmed Washington Square Park,” *Washington Square Park* (blog), accessed December 16, 2022, <https://washingtonsquarepark.org/news/2022/09/05/the-men-who-farmed-washington-square-park/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Take a Look at Washington Square’s Black History,” *Washington Square Park* (blog), accessed December 16, 2022, <https://washingtonsquarepark.org/news/2020/02/01/black-history-month/>.

<sup>4</sup> Jesse E. Hoffnung-Garskof, “Community,” in *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* (Princeton University Press, 2019), <http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctvc77gsz.8>, 99

Street, Greene Street, Sullivan Street, Minetta Lane, and East Twenty-Seventh Street).<sup>5</sup> This resulted in a color line being drawn in the area inhabited by African Americans and these new immigrants as they were both limited to the housing that they were able to attain in New York. A racist exposé by Stephen Crane regarding the tenants of Greenwich Village, specifically on Minetta Lane which housed many well-respected Cubans of color, stated that “‘nearly all the streets thereabouts were unmistakably bad’ on account of the districts ‘negro’ residents who were ‘among the worst element of their race.’”<sup>6</sup> These immigrants quickly became racialized and became part of the local community.

“Little Africa” was a part of the south side of the neighborhood that NYU stepped into upon the purchase of their first building in Washington Square East in 1835. Previously founded in 1831, the university was having classes in downtown City Hall prior to the purchased building. The building that stood before was an old Gothic style building that was the former home of artists Winslow Homer, Daniel Huntington, and Eastman Johnson as well as architects Alexander Jackson Davis and Richard Morris Hunt and the meeting place of the New-York Historical Society, the New York Academy of Medicine, and the American Chemical Society.<sup>7</sup> This new Gothic building the university built marked a change in Washington Square. Slowly different groups of people began to arrange themselves within the square – the West Village comprising the middle-class, and the south side of Washington Square continuing to house the African Americans and immigrant population. The end of the Civil War in 1865 marked another changed around “Little Africa.” Many major cities started to see a new artistic era known as Bohemianism, a form of counterculture as they practice of an unconventional lifestyle focusing

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<sup>5</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, “Community,” 102.

<sup>6</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof, “Community,” 105.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas J. Frusciano and Marilyn H. Pettit, *New York University and the City: An Illustrated History* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 143.

on the pursuit of art. Many writers and artists settled themselves in the south side of Washington Square to the inexpensive houses. On the brief history of the university on the official NYU site, this history of the neighborhood and the people who were in the neighborhood before NYU's presence is left out.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the late 1800s, NYU began to look for property to purchase as there was an increase in student enrollment. This need for expansion led the university to purchase a campus in the Bronx called University Heights. Although not in Manhattan, it is important to note this purchase as the university was starting to move from the perception of being an urban commuter school for the mercantile class within New York City to a more residential college.<sup>9</sup> This sudden change in perception came as the university started to see an increase in out of state student enrollment and needed to find property that would allow for the construction of permanent dormitories to house these students. This new campus allowed for the university to expand its programs and provide student housing. In addition, the undergraduate program moved to the Bronx, while at the Washington Square campus focused on professional and graduate programs. This addition of the Bronx campus slowly increased admissions from 200 students in 1903, to 559 in 1917.<sup>10</sup>

After World War I, both campuses experienced an increase in student enrollment, providing the university with additional tuition allowing them to reduce their debts and focus on

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<sup>8</sup> NYU Web Communications, "A Brief History of New York University," accessed December 16, 2022, <http://www.nyu.edu/content/nyu/en/faculty/governance-policies-and-procedures/faculty-handbook/the-university/history-and-traditions-of-new-york-university/a-brief-history-of-new-york-university>.; Note: NYU states that the university building mentioned was a mix of academic spaces with rental apartments above which included an "extraordinary roster of tenants including the artist Winslow Homer... the architects A.J. Davis and Richard Morris Hunt." The same people mentioned previously in my paper as having their houses demolished to create this University building.

<sup>9</sup> Frusciano, "New York University and the City," 148.

<sup>10</sup> Frusciano, "New York University and the City," 149. Note: Enrollment within Washington Square College increased more and more from 500 in 1919 to more than 7,000 in 1929, although the university experienced a decrease in enrollment in 1918 due to the first World War.

more expansion – this time in the Washington Square campus.<sup>11</sup> In 1924, the university began to reach out to the Judson Memorial Baptist Church, owner of Hotel Judson, in hopes of acquiring the building to use it as a dormitory. The church was located on Washington Square South, built in 1892, with their mission being to provide a stable presence to unite the immigrants and the wealthier people within the neighborhood.<sup>12</sup>

The Judson Hotel was one of the ways that the church served those within the lower-income community as it provided housing and a social center for the poor. Administrators from NYU sent letters to the church that stated “At the present time, we are seriously considering the erection of a very large dormitory near Washington Square, and before we go much farther with the project, I believe we should know just what the chance might be for securing the Hotel Judson, either on a long lease or by outright purchase.”<sup>13</sup> Although there is no letter of the response from the church on this matter, this purchase was confirmed in 1925 as noted in a 1925 NYT article that said the university announced this purchase, their fourth purchase so far, with the intentions of the building to be for student housing as the only dormitory in the area was Varick House.<sup>14</sup> The agreement upon purchase, made with the church, was that there would be no major changes done to the exterior of the building, to preserve its historic nature.

This newly purchased building, when converted into a dormitory years later, was strictly reserved for students. In a pamphlet for the summer session 1934, the dormitory was labeled as a

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<sup>11</sup> Frusciano, “New York University and the City,” 147. Note: NYU acquired the old Triangle Shirtwaist Factory building in 1929, renamed the Brown building after doner Frederick Brown. This old factory building experienced a fire that broke out on the eighth, ninth and tenth floors. The doors to the factory were locked and people were unable to get out of the building resulting in 147 dead, those who had jumped from the building to escape the flame. NYU still currently uses this building as science offices, classrooms, and laboratories. A plaque on the outside of the building recognizes the event that took place in 1911.

<sup>12</sup> Judson Memorial Church, “Judson Memorial Church:: Our Building,” Judson Memorial Church, accessed December 18, 2022, <http://judsonclassic.org/OurBuilding>.

<sup>13</sup> Letter of correspondence between university and Judson Hotel by Muriel Mantel (6, March 1923), RG. 10, Box 41, Folder 3, New York University Archives, New York, New York.

<sup>14</sup> “Judson Hotel to Be N.Y.U Dormitory,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1925.

residence for men and women. Student response for the dormitory was positive as the dormitories hosted events such as holiday events to promote a sense of community and allow students to feel at home in Judson Hall. One graduate student sent a letter to organizers in charge of the dormitory in 1936 stating “My niece and I wish to express our appreciation for the very lovely home you are providing for us here...”<sup>15</sup> This method of providing housing that felt like home was critical in helping the university look more appealing to out of state students and in order to gain more income through student housing that would otherwise be going to boarding houses and apartments within the area. In the summer of 1938, the university started to discuss plans for the dormitory being made into a woman’s only residence hall in the future. In a later letter addressed in the summer of 1948, this reopening of the Judson as a woman’s only residence was unveiled after the university shut down the dormitory for extensive renovations.<sup>16</sup>

One of the downsides of the purchase of Hotel Judson that affected the community was that NYU did not allow outsiders to use the dormitory building, even during break sessions. A letter from the Bronx Company of Jehovah’s Witnesses dated in 1939, asked the university if they would be able to provide housing for a Jehovah Witnesses convention would be held in Madison Square Garden and many of the New York hotels would be occupied because of the World Fair that was taking place at the same time. The university responded, in a short response, that the dormitories were only to regularly registered students, and they are not allowed to rent them to “outsiders,” but they failed to present the company with any leads on other places they may stay.<sup>17</sup> Although this was their reasoning for not allowing non-students to stay in the dormitories, they controlled the types of students they allowed within Judson Hall, desiring to

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<sup>15</sup> Letter of correspondence between university and Judson Hotel, Muriel Mantel records.

<sup>16</sup> Historical building renovated as student residences letter (1, July 1948), RG. 10, Box 42, Folder 1, New York University Archives, New York, New York.

<sup>17</sup> Letter of correspondence between university and Judson Hotel, Muriel Mantel records.

keep a higher white student population within the dormitory as the enrollment of African American students grew.<sup>18</sup> The university took away a hotel, originally used to help the surrounding community in different ways, for student use as they continued to grow within the area of Washington Square. As this purchase of the hotel was agreed upon by both parties, it did not warrant community outcry since the agreement did not end in residents of the neighborhood being removed from housing like what would occur with later purchases. Now, the former Judson Hall is known as the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, the building is NYU's History department's building. On the ground floor there are free public programs that highlight the history, politics, and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world as well as student programs such as holiday celebrations, art galleries, and other artistic performances.<sup>19</sup>

During World War II NYU experienced a decline in student population that in later decades contributed to the university's expansion. In 1941-1942 there were 47,525 students but this number decreased to 30,485 in 1943-1944.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the war, with the introduction of the G.I. Bill of Rights to give federal aid that provided services to veterans, NYU's student body increased to 70,376 students in 1949.<sup>21</sup> The university had to find places for student instruction and housing; the quick solutions for this problem was using high school classrooms in Westchester for instruction, using rooms provided by a local hospital for housing and turning the army barracks on the Heights campus into apartments.

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<sup>18</sup> Memorandum to acting chancellor (11, May 1951), RG. 10, Box 42, Folder 2, New York University Archives, New York, New York. Note: The letter to the acting chancellor states that more than 25% of women of color within the dormitory cause the depletion of white patronage. They believe that they should stop the number of students of color from coming within the dormitory, although they also admit that the reason these students are coming to the Judson for housing is because "it is extremely difficult in this part of the city to find places for them to live." This is all to keep their white students comfortable and happy. This letter shows the power over student housing that the university has, an issue that students of color still talk about today as they notice that there are higher rates in which they are placed in some of the "lesser" dormitories owned by the university.

<sup>19</sup> "NYU KJCC," NYU KJCC, August 21, 2015, <https://www.kjcc.org/>.

<sup>20</sup> Frusciano, "New York University and the City," 187.

<sup>21</sup> Frusciano, "New York University and the City," 197.

The university's plan for expansion for an educational center around Washington Square came as there was a desire to increase the status of the School of Law because the program was declining. At the time, the golden standard for legal training was what was being accepted by Harvard, Yale, and Columbia – full-time students who already obtained a degree being taught by full-time legal scholars.<sup>22</sup> NYU allowed full-time and part-time studies and did not insist on an A.B degree before entering the law school. In the 1920s, when standards of law schools were called into question, NYU lost credibility in this field due to these practices that they allowed and needed to change this image. They started hiring full legal schools in the 1930s, moving away from the large number of part-time instructors they had. The Depression, competition from other law schools, the decrease in students within law schools after the outbreak of war all contributed to the decline of NYU's law program.<sup>23</sup>

In an effort revive the law program, Arthur T. Vanderbilt, the new dean of the law school in 1943, proposed a construction of a law center that would improve the program. The proposed plan of construction was released in 1947. The place where the university was considering would be located on the block consisting of Sullivan, West Third, MacDougal Street and Washington Square South, the area populated mostly by black and brown immigrants. The community responded greatly to this change by forming committees, protesting, and petitioning. Many residents were unaware of these planned changes on the blocks being considered until tenants in the desired buildings for the law center were not granted lease renewals the following year.<sup>24</sup>

In response to the plans for expansion for the new law center, the community listed several reasons as to why they opposed this expansion into their neighborhood. Amongst these reasons was that this expansion would evict nearly three hundred people who were unable to

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<sup>22</sup> Frusciano, "New York University and the City," 203.

<sup>23</sup> Frusciano. 204

<sup>24</sup> Frusciano. 204-206

afford more expensive housing in other areas, it would add more traffic on the west side of the village in terms of parking, and that it would destroy the “residential character of historical Washing Square”.<sup>25</sup> The Save Washington Square Committee, led by Harold Fleming sent a letter to the university in October 1947 stating that the law center proposal is in violation of recommendations for NYU to expand East rather than around the park and ask them to sit down to speak to them to come to some position on the plans of the law center.<sup>26</sup> Many petitions were created totaling over 12,000 signatures. The university chose to respond with silence and in January of 1949, residents started to receive eviction notices which they fought back against. In July of the same year, a slum clearance housing project was proposed within the city under Title I of the 1949 Federal housing act. The two-block area in Greenwich Village was designated as a slum by Robert Moses, City Construction Coordinator, which caused even more outcry within the community that stated many of the buildings, although some old, were under good construction with many recently renovated by owners. Those within the neighborhood were worried for the future of the Village.<sup>27</sup>

Through resistance, the community was able to get NYU to postpone a vote within City Council, allowing more time for residents to find housing. Despite the protests and petitions from the community, the Law Center was finished in 1951, with the opening of Vanderbilt Hall.<sup>28</sup> With slum clearance within the village being approved, the area that was considered was West Broadway, West Houston, Mercer, and West Fourth Street. The idea behind slum clearance was to improve residential buildings by rebuilding them. NYU supported the project in hopes of acquiring the land for expansion not for the use to improve existing community residential

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<sup>25</sup> Frusciano, “New York University and the City,” 206.

<sup>26</sup> New York University Law Center (17, October, 1947), MC. 94, Box 16, Folder 11, New York University Archives, New York, New York.

<sup>27</sup> Federal public housing and slum clearance project (1949), MC. 94, Box 17, Folder 17, New York University Archives, New York, New York.

<sup>28</sup> Frusciano, “New York University and the City,” 207.

buildings but to use them for “educational” purposes. Once again, community members were angry at NYU believing the project to be another way for NYU to gain private property for a discounted price. The Chancellor Henry Heald stated that the university served New York City’s public through education and believed NYU had an important role to play in terms of higher education within New York City.<sup>29</sup> In 1954, despite the Manhattan Borough President’s Community Planning Board agreeing with the community by opposing the development projects, the Board of Estimate endorsed Moses’ plan, gaining the title of the land. This soon landed in the hands of NYU for \$1.2 million with a plan to construct a library, student center and classroom building on the property.

With the recent land acquisition, the relationship between NYU and the community was worse than during the law center controversy. NYU failed time and time again to listen to the needs of the community and although there were attempts to appease the community, the damage had already been done.<sup>30</sup> Any efforts after the fact seemed like damage control for the ever-growing problem of NYU taking from the community. Although the community knew when the land was purchased of NYU’s future to build a library, opposition towards the building did not start until 1965, one year after the proposed design for the library was unveiled. The immediate reaction from the community was that the 12-story high building would leave apartments in shadows for most of the day as the height of the building would block the sun and the view of the park would be obscured. Another reason was that the library would only be accessible to the students, the local community that NYU shared its grounds with would not be

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<sup>29</sup> Frusciano, “New York University and the City,” 208-209.

<sup>30</sup> 238 Thompson Street – eviction of tenants (1955), RG. 10, Box 45, Folder 16, New York University Archives, New York, New York. Note: This document is an example of the continued issues of evictions that plagued the community by the university. This folder is restricted so the exact contents of the document was unable to be viewed, but the title of this folder says enough. From the university standpoint, this is a document that would be critical to remain private, even decades later, as this information is something that is not even within other secondary sources.

allowed within the premises, at this point NYU owned most of the buildings facing the square. James Hester, NYU's president, stated that the reaction from locals is an "emotional reaction" built on the history of "prejudice" the villagers have with the university.<sup>31</sup> He did not understand why the pushback for the library happened a year after the university's initial release of the plans. In his responses, he was not sympathetic to the concerns of the community, disregarding what they believed.

The community continued to organize through 1966, hosting rallies within the park against the proposed library building. The library controversy not only became a community issue but a political one. NYU's student newspaper, *Washington Square Journal*, reported on a public hearing on the library where many political candidates of both parties were adjointed pledging their opposition to the library. The meeting was interrupted by Jane Jacobs, a strong opponent against the building, with a march occurring after the meeting. From the editorial section within the student newspaper, students understood the reaction from the locals to the university and reports of the unfolding events between the university and villages continued within the newspaper until the tuition hike. In December 1966, the university stated a raise in tuition that caused outrage amongst students, believing that this was mainly to fund all the expansion projects that were occurring.<sup>32</sup> Although the student newspaper still mentions important parts of the library controversy, the tuition hike becomes the main issue for students to speak about as it directly effects. Since these two events coincided, it is possible that the tuition hike happened as a distraction for students to not pay attention to the events unfolding with the administration and the local community.

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<sup>31</sup> New York University library plan box (1965), MC. 94, Box 16, Folder 12, New York University Archives, New York, New York.

<sup>32</sup> *Washington Square Journal* (September 1966-May 1967), RG 187, Box: Microfilm 6 Reel: 5052, New York University Archives, New York, New York.

At the beginning of 1967, the conflict escalated to the courts as the villagers filed a lawsuit to prove waste or fraud by NYU with the library design. The court rejected the lawsuit resulting in the only things needed to be solved to start the process of the construction of the library to be the making of amendments and zoning violations. In March 1967, Robert Kirkman, a Washington Square Campus student, publicly criticized the library stating it was an “architectural monument” for NYU’s president Hester and Philip Johnson, the architect. He also went on to say that students should have trusted the Greenwich Village community who were against the library from the start.<sup>33</sup> In December 1967, despite how the local community and some within the student body, NYU began construction on the new library, Elmer Holmes Bobst, on Washington Square South.<sup>34</sup>

With all this need for expansion and growth, the decision to sell the Bronx campus later in 1973, the same year the newly constructed library opened, is one that does not align with what the university was doing within Washington Square. The main reason behind the university selling this campus was due to financial troubles the university was experiencing, as the enrollment of students between the 1960s and early 1970s was due to the perception of New York City’s crime rates which were increasing. The Bronx was especially hit with this perception of crime, so the university believed it was better for them to let go of the campus. This campus, from the start, had higher rates of Jewish student enrollment.<sup>35</sup> With all the builds acquired in the Washington Square campus the need for the Heights campus went away. NYU did not want to

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<sup>33</sup> Washington Square Journal, New York University reels.

<sup>34</sup> Frusciano, “New York University and the City,” 216.

<sup>35</sup> Themis Chronopoulos, “Urban Decline and the Withdrawal of New York University from University Heights, The Bronx,” *The Bronx County Historical Society Journal*, 2009. Note: In 1920, NYU wanted to make the Bronx campus strictly for “American” or “Americanized” Immigrants, especially those from Russia, who were looked at with distrust due with the end of the first world war and the communist revolution taking place within Russia. Jewish students made up 50% of the student population at the Heights campus in 1919 but this decreased to 31% in 1921. NYU’s policy to only have “Americans” within the Bronx campus as NU could not attract donations with the uptown campus, stopping students from wanting to attend NYU.

emphasize any declining urban conditions in hopes to avoid continued declining enrollment. In 1966 and 1967, articles were published claiming that minority influx had increased and older white residents avoiding going out at night due to a panic in the rise of crime. This created alarm that was soon studied by the American Jewish Congress, who found out that these articles were not true, that white people lived in large numbers around the area with a slight concentration of Puerto Ricans and African Americans. Despite the falsehood of the statistic the damage had already been done, and NYU soon made its decision to sell the Heights campus.

The expansion that NYU continues to this day is like the expansion of the past. Since fall of 2020, NYU has been experiencing a shortage of classroom space, as the applications received each year reach record breaking highs and the university takes on greater enrollment.<sup>36</sup> The building on 181 Mercer Street, now named the Paulson Center, which received a \$100 million dollar donation from John A. Paulson, will open in January 2023. This is part of NYU's Core Plan commitment to the community by enhancing spaces for public use. This building, along with the SoHo and NoHo rezoning plan that was created to generate more housing in the area by removing residential constraints and having rent-regulated homes are looked at warily in the eyes of community members.<sup>37</sup> They believe that this great change is going to cause an increase in property values which would trigger landlords to raise rents and evict tenants, targeting ones that are in rent-regulated units. The buildings that are said to be built in the future are on the border of SoHo and Chinatown, which can also get rid of small businesses.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Abby Wilson, "Billion-Dollar NYU Building at 181 Mercer Street Nears Completion," *Washington Square News* (blog), August 11, 2022, <https://nyunews.com/news/2022/08/10/181-mercerc-street-to-open-spring-2023/>.

<sup>37</sup> Kristian Burt and Carmo Moniz, "SoHo/NoHo Rezoning Approval Allows 181 Mercer to Stand," *Washington Square News* (blog), January 27, 2022, <https://nyunews.com/news/2022/01/27/rezoning-plan-continues-mercerc-construction/>.

<sup>38</sup> Lincoln Village Sun, "Protest against Soho/NoHo Rezoning 'Fake Social Justice Plan,'" *The Village Sun* (blog), May 9, 2021, <https://thevillagesun.com/protest-against-soho-noho-rezoning-fake-social-justice-plan>.

The other future expansion plan, one that is a long-term plan, is called NYU 2031. In a document made by the university, they lay out fully the history of NYU's expansion and the approach that they want to make in the future. There are charts, graphs, and maps all laying out what the assessments the university has taken within their research, where they plan on expanding, and their prediction on how much they will grow. One of the first pages within this document speaks of how it is critical for NYU to move forward but to also remember the neighborhood to which they owe "an obligation of care" that may not have always been honored in the past.<sup>39</sup>

The housing crisis that New York City is facing is something that NYU needs to consider as they continue to expand. In 1961, the city passed major zoning rules to limit building sizes and how many people were able to live in them. This is one of the reasons for the housing crisis experienced within the city today. Apartments rental prices within New York City hit a low during the early part of the pandemic, 2020 and 2021, as many people left the city and landlords offered lower rent on apartments. People who lost their source of income were unable to keep up with rent payments and efforts to stop evictions during the pandemic were successful. When more things began to open in the earlier part of 2022, rent prices skyrocketed as more and more people were looking for housing within New York City. On top of zoning issues that are preventing affordable housing being built, state and local officials are unable to come to an agreement on what to do. Public investment is needed to build and maintain affordable homes, and although Eric Adams has pledged to spend \$22 billion over 10 years on affordable housing.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> New York University, "A University as Great as Its City," 2008, [https://www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/redevelopment/documents/NYUs%20\\_strategy\\_for\\_future\\_growth\\_original\\_full\\_plan.pdf](https://www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/redevelopment/documents/NYUs%20_strategy_for_future_growth_original_full_plan.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Mihir Zaveri, "Why It's So Hard to Find an Affordable Apartment in New York," *The New York Times*, August 1, 2022, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/01/nyregion/nyc-affordable-apartment-rent.html>.

With NYU's explicit plans for expansion, they will continue to take away land that can be used for public use amidst a housing shortage. As the university moves forward, their history of changing the community continues to resurface. NYU continues to expand, not only in Washington Square Park but in other areas of New York City such as with the Tandon Campus in Brooklyn. The "Little Africa" community is not present within the Village area anymore, and these changes will continue to occur within the Village as it slowly becomes an area solely occupied by NYU. Based on the continued actions of the university, the needs of the school come first, with little regard for the neighborhood that they are in, despite the university's statement of a "commitment to the community" of the area. Has the university learned from its past? The university cannot truly say that it upholds this commitment as it continues to set out plans that will inevitably displace the community that they expand into.

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