



Greenwich Village residents create coalition to voice concerns

September 7, 2010
by [Anna Sanders](#)

Greenwich Village community members have created a new coalition to voice their concerns over NYU's plan to expand roughly six million square feet by 2031.

After Manhattan borough president Scott Stringer recently announced the suspension of the previous task force in order to hand over the process to an existing community board, community members founded the Community Action Alliance on NYU 2031. The creation of CAAN ensures that the task force's recommendations are still heard throughout the Village as the plan commences its formal public review this fall.

Andrew Berman, executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and a member of the newly created CAAN, explained the coalition's goal is to "push the community board and the elected officials and city-appointed elected officials who will be voting on the plan to follow the recommendations of the [suspended] task force."

The coalition, now made up of more than 25 groups in the community, plans to direct their attention toward public officials rather than the university, Berman said.

"With the task force we were directing our efforts toward NYU and unfortunately we found that the administration of the university did not listen, did not make any single change in response to any of the feedback that we gave them," he said.

But Alicia Hurley, NYU vice president for government affairs and community engagement, believes the task force was successful in bridging the gap between NYU and the local community, noting several of the task force's accomplishments and "an unprecedented level of communication flow between NYU and its community."

"The goal of the task force was to provide a forum for the university to have a constructive and civil dialogue with its community, to share its plans and think through its options with input from the task force members and to plan for a future that brought the community and NYU to a point where, even if not always agreeing, they at least would better understand one another and search for compromise," she said.

Berman said one of CAAN's concerns is that NYU 2031 would be better implemented somewhere else, specifically downtown.

"Community leaders in the Financial District are begging NYU to consider locating some of these massive facilities that they want to put in the Village in their neighborhood," he said.

Hurley said the university is committed to locate half of the six million square feet in growth from the plan outside of the Greenwich Village area.

"This is a significant departure from the university's prior approach to growth, and a significant achievement by the task force," she said.

Berman said NYU 2031 is contingent upon public approval, so the coalition is now "focusing [its] attention almost exclusively on the public officials and agencies who will decide whether the plan is approved."

Jo Hamilton, chairperson of Community Board 2, said the board has already met with many members of the new coalition.

"Our conversations have been very productive," she said. "We are looking to develop a process to ensure that we work closely together, as partners, in fully understanding the NYU proposals that will be coming before us, and to develop a response that appropriately reflects the input of the community."

According to Hamilton, NYU must first submit an environmental impact statement to each Community Board that covers the area where a particular project will be located.

"It is the university's responsibility to carefully analyze the full impact of their proposals — including traffic, open space, light and air, shadow studies, infrastructure, environment, neighborhood character and many, many more issues," Hamilton said.

The full Community Board is expected to vote on the resolution in September.