

Washington Square Village

"GRID RESTORATION"

A University must plan for **centuries**, not just decades.



Bird's Eye View of Grid Restoration Looking East

Existing Conditions



The Grid Restoration concept, an alternative that could be explored beyond the year 2031, is not an option for the foreseeable future but may make programmatic and financial sense at some more distant point. The option looks at integrating Washington Square Village with surrounding neighborhoods and providing a significant amount of new academic and residential space. This concept could reestablish three Manhattan blocks that were combined into a single superblock during the 1950s Urban Renewal era. Wooster and Greene Streets could be improved as publicly-accessible pedestrian routes. Restoring these streets could eliminate the enclosed character of the superblock and encourage nearby residents, NYU students, and visitors to move through the site.

What We Heard:

Some people strongly opposed the potential demolition of Washington Square Village, while others saw this as an opportunity to recreate the city grid similar to what had been on the site before the development of the two buildings. In addition, the large at-grade open space was seen as an amenity to broader community who lacks green spaces in their neighborhood. Those concerned about the demolition of the existing buildings pointed out that the University would need to develop a full and feasible relocation policy to accommodate existing tenants.

"Unacceptable to community." – Feedback from January Open House Boards

"I strongly encourage NYU to think about embracing a longer term plan in order to accommodate this grid restoration idea. This idea would obviously require a lot of patience and many years more perhaps, but it would open this neighborhood in really important ways."

– Feedback from January Open House Boards

Washington Place



Birds Eye View of Washington Place Looking Northwest

Existing Conditions



Washington Place provides a connection between Washington Square Park and Broadway and accommodates a diverse range of programs in buildings all owned by NYU—from housing and classrooms to student services and social spaces. Yet despite its centrality and diversity of uses, the quality of the public realm along Washington Place is unappealing. Many buildings present blank, opaque facades to the street, and building entrances are difficult to locate. Façade alterations have not restored or enhanced the historic visual character of buildings. Very few trees line the street.

Appropriate landscape, streetscape, ground level uses and façade improvements could further enhance the quality of the public realm. Tree plantings or green planters on either side of Washington Place could provide shade for outdoor seating. Opening up ground levels and integrating greenery into the street could make this a friendlier place.

“Washington Place sounds great! Be creative. Not just modern big and expanding!”
– NYU Student

“WASHINGTON PLACE IS NOT A MALL.”
– Community Member

Residents are not interested in additional trees if it means the loss of parking on Washington Place. – Washington Place Block Association

What We Heard:

The internal NYU Community and several of its neighbors would like to see improvements made to Washington Place to enhance the viability of street. Those living on Washington Place would like to see limited improvements such as planters and select retail additions to maintain current atmosphere of street.

If retail is opened on Washington Place then it should include local businesses serving the population beyond NYU.

“My sense is that community members avoid shopping in retail stores that they negatively perceive are “owned” by NYU ... Therefore, if Washington Place is going to succeed as a retail street, every effort must be made to “distance” the stores from NYU personae.” – NYU Faculty

“If retail shops are added, keep local please (no corporate chains).” – Feedback from January Open House Boards.

Gould Plaza



View from West 4th Street Looking South

Existing Conditions



Gould Plaza is an open space for NYU and functions as the largest NYU-owned event space, located at the center of the University. Yet in its daily life, it often appears unwelcoming. The Plaza's raised condition - a few feet above the sidewalk - lack of vegetation, and poor quality paving and street furniture all contribute to its lack of appeal as a gathering space.

A range of improvements could help activate Gould Plaza. General accessibility could be improved by extending the stairs along the entire length of the West 4th Street edge, and giving the stairs a gentler slope to make them more suitable for seating and socializing. Ramps integrated on both the north and south sides of the plaza could allow for continuous ADA-accessible passage through the Plaza. Skylights flush with the plaza paving could be installed in conjunction with improvements to the classroom and circulation spaces below the Plaza.

New planters could frame building entrances and provide shade, filtered light, and a cooling effect for those using the plaza. Movable tables and chairs could create flexible seating arrangements. The Plaza's east side could be integrated with consistent lighter color paving which could reduce the heat effect, and higher quality materials could reinforce Gould Plaza's identity as a signature open space.

What We Heard:

Members of the NYU internal community considered Gould Plaza as the central outdoor gathering space on University property. However nearly everyone felt that improvements could be made to the site, especially by making it a livelier and greener gathering space.

"Make it alive." – Feedback from January Open House Boards

"You should definitely put more trees and tables on Gould Plaza. It seems to me, in the warmer months, a lot of people who work in the surrounding buildings eat lunch there and would encourage more people to do so." – NYU Students

Schwartz Plaza



Schwartz Plaza Looking South

Existing Conditions



Schwartz Plaza is a key connection linking NYU's academic core along Washington Square Place with the superblock area. If new space is added to the superblocks, Schwartz Plaza could increase in prominence as both a visually recognizable NYU space and a key pedestrian connection. The current design of Schwartz Plaza makes this area feel like a pass-through space. While benches provide seating and sculptures offer visual interest, this is not a space where people linger.

Improvements to Schwartz Plaza could strengthen the space as a key campus connection and encourage people sit, study, or meet with friends. Adding large canopy trees could improve tree cover to create shade and decrease the sense of being in a tall, narrow corridor. Green walls on Bobst Library and Shimkin Hall could allow plantings to climb the sides of these buildings. In addition, facade improvements to Bobst Library and Shimkin Hall could allow the interiors of these buildings to spill out into Schwartz Plaza, where seating can be increased.

What We Heard:

Schwartz Plaza was considered more of a pass-through rather than a place to meet with friends. The internal NYU community responded well to the idea of making Schwartz Plaza a more welcoming and dynamic gathering space.

"Brings life to neighborhood" – Feedback from January Open House Boards

"Anything you do would be an improvement...Anything to bring light and sense of openness to this claustrophobic corridor would be really welcomed." - Feedback from January Open House Boards