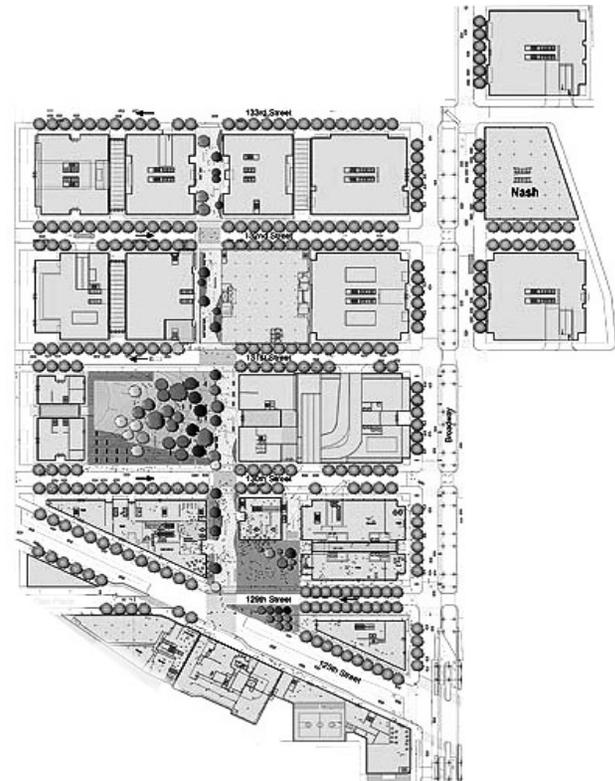


# Columbia's West Harlem Expansion: A Look at the Issues



A guide and reference created by the  
Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification

*The cultural richness of Harlem, Washington Heights, and surrounding neighborhoods is an essential part of what makes Columbia a great place to work and study.*

—*neighbors.columbia.edu* (May 2007)

Columbia is a mostly white university that has proposed building a new campus in a neighborhood whose residents are predominantly people of color. The University's past developments are largely responsible for the transformation of Morningside Heights from a racially and economically diverse neighborhood to an affluent white one. Yet current campus discourse regarding Columbia's latest development proposal largely avoids critically engaging issues of race and racism. Columbia today is neither removed from its own history as a developer nor from gentrification in New York City as a whole.

Gentrification is the process by which poor and working-class urban neighborhoods are transformed for middle class residential and business uses. This occurs through an influx of private capital and affluent residents that often results in the displacement of low-income tenants and neighborhood businesses. In the US, gentrification is most often associated with the displacement of people of color and the rupture of their communities as more affluent white residents move in. Many see gentrification as the continuation of this country's long history of uprooting people of color in the interest of economic or political gain.

The fact that gentrification tends to rely on racism and classism conflicts with the way most college students are taught to see race and ethnicity— that is, in terms of affirmative action, cultural heritage months, and promotional brochures full of diverse classrooms. Students and universities generally see the presence of people of color on a college campus as valuable. The presence of people of color in an urban neighborhood, however, is viewed as an obstacle to rising property values.

This contradiction is alive and well in Columbia's proposed expansion: even as the University promotes its plan by celebrating Harlem's racial diversity, its proposal is certain to accelerate gentrification in a neighborhood that is over 90 percent people of color.

- In its current form, Columbia's expansion would shut down more than eighty neighborhood businesses and destroy 132 units of affordable housing.
- More importantly, it would bring thousands of Columbia affiliates from both the Morningside and Medical campuses into West Harlem, dramatically increasing housing pressures throughout Harlem and Washington Heights.
- In addition to destroying so many businesses that serve current residents, Columbia's expansion would bring with it new businesses that cater to the more affluent population of students, faculty, and administrators, further changing neighborhood character.

**Columbia markets itself on the basis of the racial diversity of its student body and of surrounding neighborhoods, but it does so without demonstrating respect for people of color or commitment to their well-being.**

**If the University truly values Harlem for its “cultural richness,” it must expand in such a way that ensures that the mostly black and Latino residents of Harlem and Washington Heights will not see their communities destroyed by displacement and their neighborhoods changed beyond recognition.**

## SCEG on CU's Expansion

The Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification, or SCEG, is a campus group that works to educate the student body about expansion and to mobilize students in solidarity with our neighbors in West Harlem. We are for the dissemination of accurate information and equitable, sustainable development practices. One common misconception about Columbia's expansion is that people are either completely for expansion or completely against it. In reality, the debates about expansion have more to do with how it takes place than whether it will take place. Almost no one, including West Harlemites, is against the expansion entirely. Everyone recognizes that expansion will happen in some form, but what SCEG and many of the people commonly seen as "against expansion" want is for expansion to take place in such a way that respects the lives and livelihoods of our neighbors.

Many people are also confused about the West Harlem community's adverse reaction to Columbia's plans—if they aren't against expansion, why do they seem to be so angry about the proposed expansion? We students got to campus about fifty years too late to understand why so many in the neighborhood mistrust the University. In the 1960s, during the wave of expansion that created East Campus, the International Affairs Building, the Law School, Plimpton, Ruggles, McBain, and the School of Social Work, nearly 10,000 people were evicted from their homes to make way for Columbia with virtually no dialogue, no compromise, and no compensation. The well-known student protests of 1968 had much to do with Columbia's record as a landlord and a developer, and not only with the proposed gym in Morningside Park. Even since 1968, though the University has indisputably changed its practices for the better, CU has converted more than 6000 units of privately held housing in the neighborhood into office space and student and faculty housing, giving many residents the impression that they are being squeezed out of their own communities.

Today, as Columbia moves forward with its own seven billion dollar development plan in an area of West Harlem known as Manhattanville, neighborhood residents want to ensure that any development takes their community into account. To this end, Community Board 9 has spent nearly fifteen years in concert with urban planning experts at the Pratt Center developing a 197-A plan for the redevelopment of West Harlem. The 197-A calls for the protection of existing jobs, businesses and affordable housing in the area, as well as an investment in creating further affordable housing and living wage jobs as a part of any new development there. It also calls for environmentally sound construction practices and buildings so that future developments are truly sustainable. This framework for development creates a real opportunity for Columbia to be a role model for other large-scale expansions by universities and other non-profit institutions.

This opportunity, however, is also a necessity for the University. Columbia claims to pride itself on diversity and seldom misses an opportunity to extol the benefits of a racially and economically diverse student body and of being situated in such a diverse neighborhood. A huge number of students and faculty chose this school in large part because it is in New York. If Columbia develops outside of the parameters of the 197-A plan, it will be a loss to future students, who, having chosen to come to school in one of the most diverse cities in the world, will find themselves in a largely homogenous neighborhood. Moreover, as students, we want to be proud of our school. In its promotional materials, CU declares its commitment to the vitality and diversity of the communities of upper Manhattan and speaks of strengthening ties with its neighbors, even as it pursues the use of eminent domain to develop West Harlem. Eminent domain and the threat of its deployment preclude good faith negotiations, period. If Columbia truly cares about its neighbors, it must negotiate with them, not threaten them with force. The only forum in which Columbia is currently negotiating with neighborhood residents is in the context of a legally mandated Community Benefits Agreement. These negotiations constitute the bare minimum, and as a

University that pays so many to teach about social justice and human rights, Columbia ought to lead the way in negotiating with its neighbors about their community's future, not simply doing what is required by City Hall. Finally, the keystone of Columbia's expansion plan is a proposal to rezone the area as a mixed-used district, a move that in and of itself would send property values through the roof because it would allow for denser development. As a tax-exempt entity, Columbia University pays no property taxes, and thus stands to net millions of dollars in assets through the rezoning process alone. It is only right that Columbia should invest some of that windfall into programs for affordable housing, as such a zoning change would price many West Harlem residents out of their own neighborhood.

If it follows certain guidelines, CU's proposed campus in West Harlem could be a model for development. Around the country, other elite universities like USC, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins are pursuing similarly ambitious expansion plans, as our university embarks on the largest fundraising campaign in the history of higher education. One of Columbia's main arguments for expansion is that it needs more space in order to keep up with its peer institutions. Columbia should also take some development tips from its peer institutions. Harvard, for instance, has pledged to build all buildings in its upcoming development to the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Standard, and Harvard already finances and operates a number of continuing education scholarships for neighborhood residents as well as several affordable housing programs. The future of elite Universities may lie in further development, but truly elite Universities will develop responsibly and equitably. In order to remain on par with peer institutions, Columbia

must make concrete commitments to affordable housing, environmentally sustainable development, and living wage jobs, all of which are central to the 197-A.

Columbia, however, has been silent on these points except to assure students and residents that expansion will be good for them. Alliances and negotiations cannot survive on good faith alone. Columbia must pledge itself publicly to benchmarks in each of these areas—living wage jobs, units of affordable housing, and environmental standards—and write them into the Community Benefits Agreement. That way, when we are told expansion will be good for us and for our neighbors, we can believe it. None of these concessions and commitments will inhibit CU's plan in substantive ways: people will be working at this new campus—pay them well; people will be priced out of the neighborhood where they grew up while the University gets a tax-free windfall from zoning changes—split the difference to create affordable housing; buildings are going up in a neighborhood with one of the country's highest asthma rates and only a stone's throw from the Hudson river—minimize pollution. This is what we are asking for, and this is what is required to make the expansion the win-win proposition it could be.

**Do you support an equitable and accountable expansion?**

**Do you think there are ways this development could be mutually beneficial to Columbia University and West Harlem?**

**Turn to the last page to learn more about how to get involved.**

# The Community's 197-a Plan

While Columbia has consistently declared that its expansion into West Harlem will be an 'all-or-nothing' project, there is an alternative scenario for development that addresses the needs of both the University and its neighbors, and has broad public support. The 197-a plan is a set of guidelines created by the West Harlem community to inform and promote redevelopment in the neighborhood. Community Board 9, as the most local form of government, began developing the 197a plan in 1991. The plan is now in its final stages of revision, having undergone almost 15 years of public hearings to seek community input and create a comprehensive vision for the future of West Harlem. The framework set forth in the 197-a plan would allow for Columbia to expand in a way that recognizes and supports the needs of existing and future generations of the community that already lives in West Harlem, including neighborhood businesses and residents.

**In the broadest terms, the 197-a plan calls for the protection and creation of affordable housing and living wage jobs, environmentally sustainable development, and in-fill development (building around non-Columbia-owned properties).**

## **Five key concerns drive the plan:**

- A need to improve the quality of life of its residents.
- A need to preserve historical building patterns and neighborhood scale.
- A need to encourage the creation and development of job-intensive businesses to benefit local residents.
- A need to allow for population growth in a manner that promotes diversity of incomes and ethnicity without displacement of existing residents.
- A need to significantly improve the social, cultural and economic opportunities for residents by encouraging the redevelopment of the area while preserving and enhancing the built and natural environment for present and future generations

## **As a result, the plan makes recommendations including:**

- A number of zoning changes to preserve jobs held in light industry in the area and in spaces that can absorb higher density developments for production/light manufacturing, commercial, cultural, education and residential and other mixed uses.
- Allowing for a mixture of production/light manufacturing, commercial, retail, cultural, and residential uses within the community, and in some cases within the same building to support new job creation, along with supporting current business development.
- The expansion of existing programs that provide housing for low-income tenants. Some buildings within these programs such as the TIL buildings on 133<sup>rd</sup> street are slated to be destroyed by Columbia's expansion.
- The prohibition of the use of eminent domain to convey property to any private party seeking development in Manhattan's Community District 9 (this includes Columbia's proposed expansion area).
- Using opportunities presented by zoning changes that increase residential density or allowable uses to create affordable housing.
- Creating more green and open spaces throughout West Harlem.
- The expansion of landmark designations and historically preserved sites, including sites that would be destroyed by Columbia's expansion in its current form.
- Improving transportation and transit in the neighborhood through widening select streets, creating bike paths, and improving bus services
- Studying and planning much needed improvements to community facilities such as schools, senior citizen centers and youth centers.

**Many of these recommendations do not conflict with Columbia's plans for the area, such as creating more green spaces, and creating new jobs. Yet the University has ignored key concerns of the community such as preserving existing affordable housing and businesses, developing contextually with current building heights, and not using eminent domain for private development. Even where conflicts exist, in many cases, their resolution would not require a wholesale abandonment of Columbia's expansion plans but rather select compromises.**

*For the full 197-a plan see - <http://www.prattcenter.net/cp-cb9.php>*

# Columbia's Expansion Plan for West Harlem

Columbia argues it needs to expand because it has less space per student than other top-ranking universities. The University says it needs this space to maintain its position as an elite research institution, but the University's caliber should be measured by its programming and its policies, not square footage alone.

The University's proposed expansion into Manhattanville is a long-term plan for this expansion of the University's programs and its research facilities that would take until the year 2030 to complete.

## Buildings for the first phase of the proposed development include:

- The Jerome L. Greene Science Center
- A new site for Columbia Business School
- Columbia's School of the Arts
- A privately-owned publicly accessible park space
- A permanent site for the new, University-assisted public secondary school (opening in temporary space in September 2007)

The first phase would also include renovations to University-owned buildings on the south side of 125th Street — Prentis Hall as part of the new School of the Arts and the 560 Riverside Dr. faculty apartments. The University also may include more housing for faculty and grad students.

## Why Manhattanville specifically?

- A primarily non-residential area that is “underutilized and lacked community amenities”
- A contiguous space for 5 million square feet of new development
- Access to public transportation
- Location between Columbia's Morningside Heights and Washington Heights campuses

Although the proposed rezoning area consists of approximately 35 acres, only 17 of these—from the north side of West 125th Street to West 133rd Street between Broadway and Twelfth Avenue, plus three properties immediately east of Broadway from West 131st Street to West 134th Street— are for Columbia's proposed development. The University is requesting that the area, which is currently zoned as light manufacturing,

be rezoned for mixed-use development that would replace current businesses.

**Biotech:** Columbia proposes to build a biomedical research level-3 lab (out of 4 levels). The University has a poor safety record. It was fined \$792,029 in 2002 by the U.S. Environmental Protection agency for violations involving improper storage and disposal of toxic waste and faulty emergency plans. This plan raises concerns not only because of CU's lackluster safety record, but also because the research lab would be built on a fault line surrounded by a densely populated neighborhood, and would extend 7 stories underground in a flood plain area, making the lab especially vulnerable to natural disasters and accidents.

**Retail:** Columbia says that they will encourage ground-level retail to make the neighborhood more vibrant, but change in retail is one type of gentrification. If the retail stores included in the plan are only high-end, they will not benefit, for example, residents of Manhattanville or Grant Houses, who may be forced to travel farther to buy things they need at prices they can afford.

**Community Access:** Columbia always emphasizes that the open space they create will be accessible to local residents as well as students and faculty. While open space in Manhattan is certainly desirable, creating a campus that is open and inviting to people not affiliated with the University means more than constructing buildings with glass walls and not blocking off streets. The commitment to integrating local residents into the campus space must go deeper than this. Columbia must commit to making its resources available to local communities, such as its libraries, its athletic facilities and space for community meetings.

**Columbia's expansion is not only about the future of the institution but its effects on West Harlem. West Harlem residents will be negatively impacted and possibly displaced through such a large development if community resources, affordable housing, jobs and environmental concerns are not met within the expansion. The expansion must be accessible and accountable to the residents of West Harlem, many of whom are low-income people and people of color thus far not heard in this campus plan, despite CU's self-proclaimed support of diversity and devotion to the communities of Upper Manhattan.**

# Affordable Housing and Columbia's Expansion

In the 1960s, to make way for the construction of the eastern portion of Columbia's Morningside Campus and housing for Columbia affiliates in the neighborhood, the University evicted more than 9000 people.

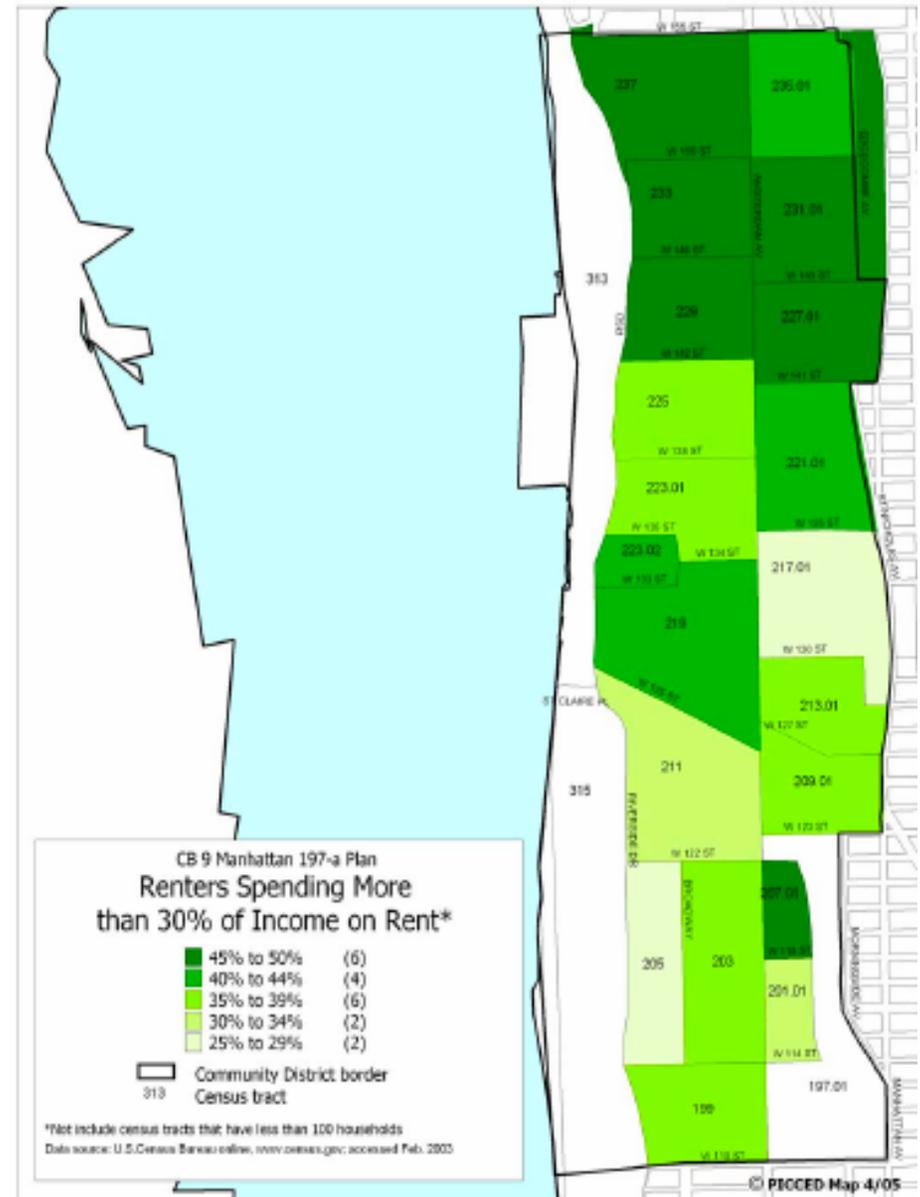
- Since 1968, Columbia has acquired and converted more than 6000 units of affordable, rent-regulated housing for institutional use.
- In 2003, Columbia announced its plans to create a new campus in West Harlem, causing concern throughout the neighborhood that Columbia's record of destroying affordable would continue unabated.
- Should it acquire the housing in the expansion area, Columbia has pledged to relocate displaced tenants. However, in addition to destroying the 150 units of affordable housing in the expansion area, Columbia has provided no guarantee that it will preserve the approximately 600 remaining units of affordable housing in its Morningside Heights properties.
- **Columbia is contributing to a citywide crisis:** in 2002 alone, 20,000 rent-stabilized units were lost to deregulation, and between 1990 and 2005 22,688 units of Mitchell-Lama housing were lost.

**Columbia has not committed to creating a single unit of affordable housing as part of an expansion project that will only exacerbate the existing housing crises in the University, the neighborhood, and the City at large.**

## So what is affordable housing?

The federal government's definition of affordable housing is when no more than 30% of a household's income is spent on rent.

In 2005, Community District 9 had a median household income of \$32,918/year, so rents over \$823/month would be considered generally "unaffordable." The median monthly rent burden in CD9 happens to be past this limit (\$884); currently, 40% of CD9 residents pay over 1/2 their monthly incomes on rent (including Columbia University affiliates). Moreover, the median household income of West Harlem is lower than that of CD9 as a whole (in 2000, under \$20,000/year), so the need for affordable housing is even greater here.



## Living Wage and Columbia's Expansion

One of the major selling points of Columbia's expansion plan is the University's claim that the development would create 6,900 new jobs in the area: 21% administrators, 20% researchers, 14% faculty, 14% technicians, 9% post-doc, 7% support staff, 6% clerical staff, and 9% non-Columbia jobs

- Of the Columbia jobs, only support staff and clerical staff do not require advanced degrees or extensive job training, and they are the only jobs that Columbia could not readily fill with University affiliates (most technician positions, for example, are likely to be awarded to graduate students). These jobs would account for about 900 of the new jobs created by the expansion.
- The University estimates that 9% would be non-Columbia jobs – about 620 mostly minimum-wage, service sector jobs (retail, food service, etc.).
- The trade off of these 1500 or so jobs, created over the next 30 years, does not add up when considering that there are already 1,600 jobs in the area, as estimated by the EIS Scoping Document.
- If you look at Columbia's pool of current employees, this makes sense: of all of their currently listed jobs, fewer than two thousand CD9 residents are employed and only 213 of those (just over 10%) live above 125<sup>th</sup> St. or in public housing.
- Columbia also often uses subcontracted labor from employers like New England Linen and Summit Security that do not guarantee a living wage.

**The University has made no commitment verbally or in writing to ensuring that any new jobs created by the expansion will be living wage.**

### **So what is a living wage?**

A living wage enables workers to meet their needs for nutritious food and clean water, shelter, clothes, education, health care and transport, as well as allowing for a discretionary income. It should be enough to provide for the basic needs of workers and their families, to allow them to participate fully in society and live with dignity. It should take into account the cost of living, social security benefits and the relative standards of other groups. (Labor Behind the Label, 1999)

## What is Eminent Domain?

### **What is eminent domain? How is it defined?**

Eminent domain, broadly understood, is the power of the state to seize private property without the owner's consent. Historically, the most common uses of property taken by eminent domain are public facilities, highways, and railroads.

Traditionally, the power of eminent domain has been exercised for the construction of large public projects, but its use is beginning to be broadened to projects involving 'public benefit' as well as 'public use.' The decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*, a case that came before the US Supreme Court in 2004, set a precedent for property to be transferred to a private owner for the purpose of economic development. The court found that if an economic project creates new jobs, increases tax and other city revenues, and revitalizes a depressed or blighted urban area it qualifies as a public use.

This expands on a prior decision in *Berman v. Parker* (1954) which argued that the problems of large-scale urban blight need to be addressed with large-scale redevelopment plans and that land can be confiscated, and transferred to a private entity for a clearly defined *public use*. Since the *Kelo* decision, many states have passed regulations limiting the use of eminent domain to clearly proscribed limits. To this date, New York is not one of these states.

### **Are owners of condemned properties compensated?**

The Fifth Amendment to the U.S Constitution forbids the confiscation of property "without just compensation", so that anyone whose property is acquired does receive some compensation. However, this is decided not by direct negotiation between prospective developer and current owner but by the government agency, which frequently leads to compensation packages that are inadequate.

### **Can Columbia itself exercise eminent domain?**

No. Columbia is a private institution and does not have the power of eminent domain. It can, however, petition the state to exercise eminent domain as part of its development plan. In 2005, Columbia sent a letter to the Empire State Development Corporation, a state development authority

that does have the power to condemn property for seizure on behalf of private developers, and provided them with \$300,000 to cover their legal expenses.

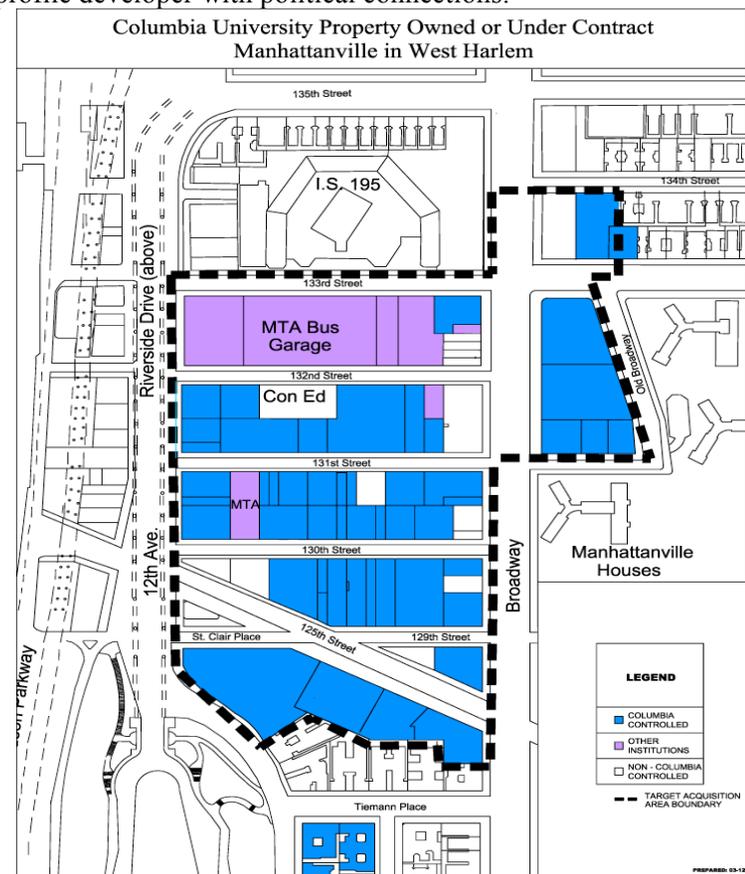
### What is wrong with eminent domain?

Is it wrong for Columbia to claim to be negotiating with the community while reserving the right to ask the state to forcibly remove them?

**Any honest negotiations have to be based on a spirit of compromise and mutual respect, not on the threat of force. It is difficult to imagine Columbia agreeing to a comprehensive benefits agreement when it can walk away from the table and remove people by force.**

- Community residents have consistently asked the West Harlem Local Development Corporation, the body responsible for negotiations with the University, to make the prohibition of eminent domain a precondition for any talks with Columbia. Community Board 9, the governing body for the Manhattanville and Morningside Heights area, unanimously passed a resolution calling for the same. Columbia has disregarded the opinions of these community bodies.
- Community residents argue that the University has unfairly demonized local business-owners as “profit-seeking outsiders” despite the fact that they have worked in the community for generations and are active participants in CB9 and other community organizations. This is seen as a divide-and-conquer tactic that would allow Columbia to pave the way for the use of eminent domain without provoking political outcry from local residents and politicians.
- Columbia proposed and funded a blight survey in Manhattanville (to be conducted through NY State as a precondition for the use of eminent domain), in order to acquire the building rights for sub-grade properties within their proposed development area.
- What is disturbing about this is that Columbia itself owns 60% of the land involved in the blight determination and controls more than 80%, including all the vacant properties, open lots, properties in disrepair, and inadequately secured or ill-maintained property in the area that could be cited as a basis to find the area blighted. Thus, CU has certainly played a role in stifling the neighborhood’s economic development and engendering any blight that has occurred there, particularly since blight would have been a false characterization of the neighborhood before CU began buying property in the area in 2000.

- Though the blight survey has yet to be completed, the Columbia Spectator was able to obtain (through a FOIA request) a copy of CU’s General Project Plan, which presumes a blight finding in the study. Community Board 9 Chair Jordi Reyes-Montblanc has called Columbia’s presumptuousness in this regard “beneath contempt”, and has vowed that any declaration of blight will be challenged with a lawsuit.
- Eminent domain is only justified if the development in question is deemed to be for a ‘public use.’ The ever-broadening definition of “public use” implied in Columbia’s pursuit of eminent domain sets a dangerous precedent in which land could be transferred to any high-profile developer with political connections.



(Properties in white represent non-Columbia properties that want to remain)

# THE EXPANSION TIMELINE: 2002 and beyond....

**Fall 2002** Columbia University announced its plan to build a new campus in the Manhattanville area of West Harlem. Columbia has described its reason for the new campus as:

“Columbia University's proposal for a major expansion into the Manhattanville area is a reflection of two of the institution's most important goals. One is Columbia's urgent need for additional space. The other is a continuation of the commitment to the communities of Upper Manhattan and our belief that this effort will bring economic and other benefits to our neighbors. The University feels that it benefits enormously by living amid such creative and resilient communities. We must continue to intellectually engage the challenges of our world, and we must be physically and spiritually integrated into the fabric of our neighborhoods and this city.”

**Spring 2003** The Coalition to Preserve Community began to meet in St. Mary's Church of Harlem to organize against Columbia's expansion plans. The group mobilized hundreds of Harlem residents against an expansion that will make rent and services inaccessible to current residents, level community-owned businesses, and transform industrial West Harlem into an extension of the Upper West Side boutique wasteland.

**October 2003** A coalition of student groups at Columbia came together to organize a panel called “The Ethics of Expansion” to look at how past and future expansion plans affect community members. The group remains active as the Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification.

**January 2004** Columbia formed three “advisory” groups to which it presents expansion plans. The student advisory group met a total of two times that semester, and student input was not solicited.

**June 2004** Community Board 9 passed a resolution condemning the use of eminent domain as a corporate development tool.

**Spring 2004** Columbia submitted its initial rezoning plan to the city of New York.

**April 2004** Columbia formally released its expansion plan to an overflowing crowd at CB9. Bollinger claimed he was being “attacked” by community members who wanted to know how CU’s expansion would concretely benefit the current residents.

**June 2004** Columbia dismantled its Community Advisory Board—just as the board completed a report backing Community Board 9's 197-A plan.

**June 2004** In a single month, two expansion-related administrators—Executive Vice President for Government and Community Affairs Emily Lloyd and Director of Facilities Management Mark Burstein—stepped down from their positions.

**Fall 2004** Community Board 9 completed its 197-A plan, a land use and zoning document that offers an alternative vision for the development of West Harlem. This plan is currently being reviewed by the City Planning Agency alongside the Columbia’s plan.

**Early 2005** The City met with local constituents and Columbia to assess how the proceedings of a synchronized viewing of Columbia’s 197-C plan and the Community Board’s 197-A plan would be processed. The city committed funds to the development of a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) – a document that codifies points of consensus and agreement between the parties – a route that ideally leads to greater public benefits. This need for a CBA prompted the formation of the Local Development Corporation (LDC) – an organization to represent a broad range of constituents and ensure communication to the public

**April 2005** The Columbia Spectator exposed a secret deal between CU and the State of New York in which the university paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Empire State Development Corporation to begin a process that could lead to condemnation of property and the use of eminent domain.

**April 2005** SCEG and the CPC held a tent city, dubbed “Bollingerville,” on College Walk that promoted dialogue with those most affected by CU’s expansion.

# Columbia's plan & the Community's plan

## What's the Difference?

There are two development plans being considered in West Harlem: a 197-A Plan developed by community members and planners at Community Board 9 that protects longtime residents and businesses and the Columbia plan.

**Columbia should sign on to the recommendations of the community's 197a plan for any development that occurs. Below are some of the main areas of difference between the two plans.**

### Community 197-A Plan

- (1) Protects existing housing and creates new affordable housing
- (2) Rules out eminent domain, protecting residents and businesses in expansion area
- (3) Creates jobs with a future for local residents
- (4) Protects manufacturing jobs
- (5) Establishes "zero waste" environmental zone, and calls for "green" buildings
- (6) Calls on institutions to set aside remaining rent regulated apartments for long term residents
- (7) Creates a special use district in which available space is shared
- (8) Respects architectural and historical integrity of the area

### Columbia's Expansion Plan

- (1) Displaces over 300 long term low income residents in the expansion zone and does not guarantee affordable housing.
- (2) Relies on the use of eminent domain, taking private and public land for Columbia's private use.
- (3) Eliminates over 1000 existing jobs and does not guarantee that jobs created will be long term living wage jobs for community members
- (4) CU's proposed jobs for locals are primarily jobs in the service sector without a living wage guaranteed
- (5) Creates bio-tech facilities - occupying more than a third of expansion area and including bio-safety level 3 labs handling deadly viruses (located directly across the street from public housing projects and other housing.) Includes biotech production and bio-terrorism research with government funding
- (6) Continues policy of taking community housing out of rent regulation and reserving it exclusively for institutional use (more than 6000 units housing long term community families eliminated in last three decades)
- (7) Creates a campus based on exclusive use of all available space for Columbia, as the only major developer for the area
- (8) Size and bulk of proposed buildings out of context to surroundings.

**July 2005** Maxine Griffith was hired as Vice President for Government and Community Affairs. Her post had been vacant since Emily Lloyd resigned a year earlier.

**October 2005** Mayor Bloomberg announced the September 2007 opening of Columbia Secondary—a school specializing in science, math and engineering that the Department of Education will operate in close collaboration with Columbia.

**November 2005** The New York City Planning Commission held a public hearing on Columbia's Environmental Impact Statement in which all who testified spoke out against Columbia's proposal.

**March 2006** The West Harlem Local Development Corporation was formally established as the sole negotiating body between community representatives and Columbia University. The LDC is meant to represent the broad range of constituents of Community District 9 and ensure communication to a broader public. The body's main purpose is to negotiate a legally binding Community Benefits Agreement document that reflects the wants and needs of the diverse community that it represents.

**August 2006** The Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), New York State's leading economic development agency, began a Neighborhood Conditions Study, which could declare the expansion area blighted. If the study finds the region to be blighted, the state of NY will be able to invoke the power of Eminent Domain to forcibly buy property in the area from owners who have refused to sell. This study was later reported to have been paid for by Columbia, who funneled the ESDC \$300,000 per year of study.

**October 2006** The University publicly launched its capital campaign by asking for \$4 billion from alumni—at the time, this was the largest fund-raising goal in the history of American universities.

**October 2006** The West Harlem Local Development Corporation voted not to take eminent domain off the table as a prerequisite for negotiating its Community Benefits Agreement with Columbia and the City. The decision sparked controversy and debate within the Community about the LDC's ability to accurately represent the wishes and needs of West Harlem residents and businesspeople.

**November 2006** The West Harlem Business Group filed a lawsuit against the Empire State Development Corporation for refusing to disclose information about the possible use of eminent domain for Columbia's proposed Manhattanville expansion.

**November 2006** The board of Education announced the temporary placement of Columbia Secondary at PS 36, a small elementary (K-2) school on Amsterdam Ave between 122<sup>nd</sup> and 123<sup>rd</sup>. This decision was made without consulting with community members. Parents, residents and students led protests against the decision.

**January 2007** The Columbia Spectator obtained the University's General Project Plan for the expansion and reported that the document, recently submitted to ESDC (the state agency empowered to exercise eminent domain), "anticipates that the area [of Manhattanville] will be declared blighted and provides for the use of eminent domain to acquire property." Columbia's assumption of blight in the expansion area came before the blight study (funded by Columbia) has been completed and is the clearest statement yet of the University's willingness to use eminent domain.

**February 2007** The Department of Education announced it will not allow Columbia to temporarily house its proposed Secondary School for Math, Science and Engineering in P.S. 36 (a K-2 school). The DOE's decision came as a response to an outpouring of opposition from P.S. 36 parents who were concerned about overcrowding and older students' influence on the younger children. Columbia Secondary is a magnet school ultimately slated to reside in the expansion footprint at 125<sup>th</sup> and B'way.

**March 2007** Columbia announces its first eviction of a tenant on University-owned property in the expansion zone, citing non-payment of rent. The tenant, Broadway Auto Center at 3251 Broadway, disputes the claim of non-payment and accuses Columbia of purposeful neglect of essential repairs. This neglect, along with Columbia's erection of scaffolding that blocked the storefront from view, greatly reduced the Auto Center's business. The Broadway Auto Center's lawyer has asked the LDC to postpone the eviction and continue negotiating.



# References

## The players, abbreviations and websites

### Key Players in the Columbia Expansion and West Harlem Community

#### Coalition to Preserve Community (CPC)

The CPC is a community organization that was founded in 2003 in response to Columbia's announcement of its plans to expand in Manhattanville. The group is composed of community activists and longtime residents of West Harlem and the adjoining areas. CPC's activism is informed by Columbia's long history of unilateral development and housing deregulation in Morningside Heights, much of which has occurred without compromise or compensation for residents who have lost their homes. In light of this history, CPC's work has focused on generating pressure on the University to depart from this history and expand in a way that respects and preserves the vitality of existing Harlem communities. They are unequivocally opposed to primary displacement of jobs and housing as well as the use of eminent domain and the construction of biotech facilities with potentially hazardous environmental and health consequences. They support new development insofar as it brings jobs with a future (read living wage) to the neighborhood, creates a proportion of affordable housing along with any new housing, and respects the historical and architectural integrity of the neighborhood. Because of these concerns, the CPC wholeheartedly supports CB9's 197-A plan.

*For more information, visit [www.stopcolumbia.org](http://www.stopcolumbia.org)*

#### Community Board Nine Manhattan (CB9 M)

Community boards are the most local form of government in New York City. Community Board Nine's jurisdiction runs from 110<sup>th</sup>-155<sup>th</sup> Sts, to the west of Morningside Ave, St. Nicholas Ave, and Edgecombe Ave, moving from the South to the North. In 1991, CB9 began work on a 197-A plan for the redevelopment of West Harlem, which was submitted for

review by the Department of City Planning (DCP) in 2005. The 197-A plan was created with input from a broad base of community residents and business owners along with consultants and city planning experts from the Pratt Center for Community Development. Early drafts of the plan were presented and critiqued in public forums and affected government agencies and elected officials. More than a concrete plan, the 197-A is a framework for development. The 197-a proposes a range of actions that would help ensure that the environment is protected, that housing opportunities for low and middle-income residents are protected and expanded, and that the creation of stable jobs along with the protection of existing businesses is paramount in any new development. The plan's zoning recommendations focus on the Manhattanville area, and would create space for mixed-use development while preserving the area's existing manufacturing and residential uses. In 2004, CB9 unanimously adopted a resolution against the use of eminent domain to seize property in Manhattanville for private development.

*For more information on CB9 M, visit [www.cb9m.org](http://www.cb9m.org)*

*For more information on the Pratt Institute, visit [www.prattcenter.net/cp-cb9.php](http://www.prattcenter.net/cp-cb9.php)*

#### Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC)

ESDC is the government agency that oversees economic development in New York State and has the power to exercise eminent domain. Most recently, ESDC invoked the power of eminent domain to condemn property in Brooklyn to make way for Bruce Ratner's hotly-contested Atlantic Yards development. In the case of Columbia's expansion, the potential use of eminent domain would involve not only the seizure of privately-held properties, but also two-city owned buildings that are part of a long-term affordable housing cooperative program called the Tenant Interim Lease program. A prerequisite for the use of eminent domain in Manhattanville would be a finding of blight as the end result of a Neighborhood Condition Study funded by Columbia and conducted by the firm AKRF. Opponents of this use of eminent domain have pointed to the fact that Columbia not only owns the majority of land it seeks to declare blighted but has also signed an agreement to pay any legal fees the State might incur as a result, criticizing the University for conflicts of interest.

*For more information, visit [www.empire.state.ny.us](http://www.empire.state.ny.us)*

### **Department of City Planning (DCP)/City Planning Commission (CPC)**

The New York Department of City Planning oversees zoning proposals in NYC before the proposals are submitted for consideration by City and Council and the Mayor's Office. With regard to West Harlem, the DCP is responsible for reviewing CB9's 197-A plan along with the 197-C plans of Columbia University and neighborhood business owners. DCP review rezoning plans to ensure that they meet certain development standards. After DCP certifies a plan, the plan will then be considered in public hearings during the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). ULURP begins once the Environmental Impact Statement for Columbia's plan is released. As of May 2007, Columbia has not yet released the EIS, but they are expected to do so very soon.

*For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp)*

### **West Harlem Business Group**

The West Harlem Business Group is composed of four family-owned businesses in Manhattanville who have refused to sell their businesses in order to make way for Columbia's expansion (Hudson Moving and Storage, Despatch Moving and Storage, Tuck-it-away Storage, and Pearlgreen Corporation). These business owners are primarily concerned with protecting their businesses against the potential use of eminent domain to convey their properties to Columbia University. Having operated in the neighborhood for decades, these businesses would like to stay, and two of them—Tuck-it-away and Hudson—have submitted zoning proposals (like Columbia's 197-C plan) to redevelop their properties. That of Anne Whitman at Hudson Moving and Storage would provide seedling space for community organizations, non-profits, and artists at affordable rates. Nick Sprayregen of Tuck-it-away Storage has proposed to rezone four of his five properties in order convert them into affordable housing. Community Board Nine has voiced their support of these two 197-C proposals and would like to see them proceed in tandem with Columbia's development.

*For more information, visit [www.westharlembusinessgroup.com](http://www.westharlembusinessgroup.com)*

### **West Harlem Local Development Corporation (West Harlem LDC)**

The West Harlem LDC was started at the request of the Department of City Planning in 2006 in order to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement with Columbia University that would address community concerns about Columbia's plan (outside of zoning issues). The twenty-member board represents the interests of CB9, tenants of private and public housing, commercial property owners, arts and cultural groups, faith-based organizations, community organizations, community development corporations, and elected officials. A representative for educational needs and concerns has not yet been added to the board. According to the LDC, its mission is to negotiate the CBA in a manner that is both transparent and accountable to the West Harlem community. So far, however, the negotiation process has not lived up to these goals. Many local residents are concerned because there has been a dearth of community forums in which to discuss the terms of the CBA and because many LDC meetings are held in executive session, so that members of the public cannot attend. Even during public meetings, there is no space for public comment. The issue of accountability to the West Harlem community is complicated by the fact that several voting members of the LDC are politicians who represent areas beyond West Harlem. However, the LDC does host a number of working groups for those interested in planning for specific issues in the negotiation process such as housing, historic preservation, arts and culture, and environmental sustainability.

*For more information, visit [www.westharlemldc.org](http://www.westharlemldc.org)*

### **Columbia University Players**

**Lee Bollinger** – Leaving Michigan on the heels of his victory in a landmark affirmative action case, University President Lee Bollinger staked his career at CU on plans of constructing a new campus. Bollinger has consistently billed the expansion as an all-or-nothing project and defended the potential use of eminent domain against tenants and businesses. His most recent statements have targeted longtime community business owners as “outsiders” and pledged to “take care” of current tenants in the expansion area, a position many have criticized as divide-and-conquer politics.

**Maxine Griffith** – Born and raised in Harlem, Maxine Griffith served as director of public planning in Philadelphia before coming to Columbia as the head of the Office of Government and Community Affairs, filling a one-year vacancy left by Emily Lloyd. Griffith's primary responsibility is to work with the political leaders of Harlem and adjacent areas as well as being one of the three people to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) on Columbia's behalf.

**Robert Kasdin** – Kasdin came to CU from Michigan with current president Lee Bollinger in 2003. As the Senior Executive Vice President, Kasdin is charged with overseeing the planning process for the expansion and supervises the offices in charge of various aspects of the project. He is also one of three negotiators on Columbia's side for a Community Benefits Agreement to be signed with the West Harlem Local Development Corporation.

**Philip Pitruzzello** – A former employee of Battery Park City Development Corporation, which was central in refashioning lower Manhattan to make way for the financial district, Pitruzzello came to Columbia in Fall 2006. His main role is to help Columbia navigate the city planning process and public review hearings. He is also one of the three people negotiating a Community Benefits Agreement on Columbia's behalf.

**Laverna Fountain** – Fountain came to the University with a background in government social services, and acts as the University's primary spokeswoman and agent for community relations on the expansion project. While Fountain is by far the most accessible administrator with comprehensive knowledge of the plan, she has no decision-making power over the project.

**Bill Lynch** – Lynch is one of five vice chairs of the Democratic National Committee, serving directly under Howard Dean. In that capacity, he is in the leadership of the organization that provides critical financial and technical support for the campaigns of local Democratic politicians. His consulting firm, Bill Lynch Associates, has been hired by CU to advise them in marketing the expansion project to community members and the public at large. To this end, he has lobbied the New York politicians whose representatives sit as voting members on the Local Development Corporation charged with negotiating a Community Benefits Agreement

on behalf of West Harlemites. His dual roles in the DNC and as a consultant for CU have left him open to criticisms of conflict of interest regarding negotiations for the CBA.

**Michael Novielli CC '04** – Despite his position in Student Services, Novielli works closely with Kasdin as the liaison to students and faculty on the expansion project.

## Common Acronyms and Abbreviations Related to Columbia's Expansion

**197-a/ 197-a plan** – 197-a is named after a section of the City Charter that establishes the right of communities to create their own framework and recommendations for development in their neighborhoods. Over the past 15 years, Community Board 9 Manhattan has been working on a 197-a plan for West Harlem that calls for such guidelines as no use of eminent domain, preservation of existing affordable housing and jobs. In addition, CB9's 197-a plan calls for future developments to be environmentally sustainable and create new affordable housing and job opportunities in order to preserve the character of existing communities.

**197-c/ 197-c plan** – 197-c plans are plans through which City Planning Commission puts forth rezoning proposals, usually in response to proposals from private developers. While the City Planning Commission is technically the author of 197-c plans, in fact, private developers usually draft, research and fund such proposals. In Columbia's case, the University seeks to rezone the area of Manhattanville from its existing light industry uses to mixed-use development. Because this would permit much higher building density office space, residential space, and academic research space to be developed in the same neighborhood, property values are sure to increase and current light industry would be displaced.

**CB9/CD9** – Community Board 9/ Community District 9 – Community Boards are New York City's most local form of government. The Borough President appoints all Community Board members. Community Boards were started in the 1970s as a response to failures of Urban Renewal projects, in order to ensure community control in the planning process. While Community Boards plan and interact directly with other government agencies, their resolutions are not legally binding. Community Districts are the areas that these Community Boards represent. Community

District 9 runs from 110<sup>th</sup> St. to 155<sup>th</sup> St. West of Morningside, St. Nicholas, and Jackie Robinson Parks. Community Board 9 is the author of the 197-a plan, which offers an alternative scenario to Columbia's current 'all-or-nothing' 197-c proposal.

**CBA** – Community Benefits Agreements are deals between developers and coalitions of community organizations that act as safeguards to ensure that affected residents share in the benefits and avoid the negative consequences of major developments. Negotiations between Columbia University and the West Harlem Local Development Corporation around a legally binding CBA began in January 2007 and are ongoing.

**CEQR** – City Environmental Quality Review is the technical process by which the full environmental impacts of rezoning projects are assessed through the City Planning Commission. The CEQR process includes forums for public input and culminates in the release of an Environmental Impact Statement.

**CPC/DCP** – the City Planning Commission and the Department of City Planning are the agencies responsible for the oversight and administration of all rezoning processes in New York City. The CPC is the lead agency in the simultaneous review of both Community Board 9 Manhattan's 197-a plan and Columbia University's 197-c proposal.

**CPC** may alternatively refer to the Coalition to Preserve Community (see "The Players"), a community organization of tenants and business owners that is fighting for the preservation of affordable housing and jobs and stopping the use of eminent domain and the construction of hazardous biotech research facilities in West Harlem.

**EDC** – the Economic Development Corporation is a city agency responsible for the economic component of the city's development initiatives. EDC currently has several development initiatives underway in West Harlem, including the Harlem Piers project and the River-to-River study (a study of all the transportation in the area).

**EIS** – an Environmental Impact Statement is a document produced by a systematic study of the potential adverse effects of any development on a given area. 'Environmental' in the context of an EIS is broadly construed to include impacts on affordable housing, jobs, traffic, air quality, community facilities, historic preservation, and neighborhood character.

The scope of an EIS is determined through public hearings. Columbia's initial EIS documents were unanimously criticized in public hearings for their lack of consideration of the socio-economic impacts of Columbia's campuses on their surrounding neighborhoods.

**ESDC** – the Empire State Development Corporation is the agency that oversees economic development in New York State and is responsible for the exercise (or not) of eminent domain. While Columbia has been adamant that ESDC is the only organization with the power to use eminent domain, they have actively encouraged and funded ESDC to consider eminent domain in West Harlem, and agreed to cover the costs of any lawsuits resulting from the use of eminent domain. (*For more information, see 'The Players'*)

**FOIA/FOIL** – The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requires any institution receiving federal government funding to disclose information involving governmental agencies in response to FOIA requests. The Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) is the New York State equivalent to FOIA. The Columbia Spectator has discovered important information about Columbia's expansion through FOIA and FOIL requests, undermining the University's claims to a transparent planning process.

**HPD** – HPD refers to the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the office that administers various housing programs in NYC, including the Tenant Interim Lease Program (see TIL, below). Without consulting the tenants of TIL buildings in the expansion area, HPD has indicated their openness to negotiating the sale of those building to Columbia University—a move that has sparked outcry and resistance from TIL tenants.

**LDC** – Local Development Corporations are bodies created to represent local interests in the context of development in a particular area. A West Harlem Local Development Corporation was created in 2006 to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement with Columbia University for their proposed Manhattanville expansion. The West Harlem LDC is composed of community leaders ranging from tenants and artists to business owners and representatives of local politicians. (*For More information, see 'The Players'*)

**TIL program** – the Tenant Interim Lease program is one of several HPD programs intended to convert buildings that were abandoned by their

owners into low-income tenant-owned cooperatives. There are two TIL buildings in the expansion area, both of which have almost completed the process required for tenants to purchase their apartments from the City. This outcome is in jeopardy because of Columbia's private negotiations to buy the TIL buildings from HPD (see above).

**ULURP** – the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure is the city-level process by which rezoning proposals are approved or denied. Beginning with the release of a draft Environmental Impact Statement, ULURP includes several opportunities for public commentary and requires the City Council's approval of a 197-c proposal for rezoning. Columbia's expansion proposal will be subject to ULURP.

## Websites for more information:

Coalition to Preserve Community  
West Harlem Residents  
<http://www.stopcolumbia.org/>

Community Board 9 (Neighborhood Link)  
<http://www.cb9m.org>

Equitable Development (PolicyLink)  
<http://www.policylink.org/EquitableDevelopment/>

Department of City Planning (NYC.gov)  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/home.html>

Gentrification Web on gentrification research  
<http://members.lycos.co.uk/gentrification/>

Information for our Neighbors (Columbia University)  
<http://neighbors.columbia.edu/>

Online Resource for New York City Residential Tenants (TenantNet)  
<http://www.tenant.net/>

Pratt Institute Center for Community & Environmental Development  
Contracted by CB9 to help develop the West Harlem 197a Plan  
<http://www.prattcenter.net/cp-cb9.php>

Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification  
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cssn/expansion>

West Harlem Environmental Action Coalition  
Developing an environmental justice scorecard for CU's plans  
<http://www.weact.org/>

West Harlem Local Development Corporation  
Negotiating the Community Benefits Agreement with Columbia  
<http://www.westharlemldc.org/>

Zoning Information (NYC.gov)  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/subcats/zoning.html>

# The Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification

## *Our Mission Statement:*

University expansion and gentrification are processes that affect everyone in our community. We recognize our unique position as students in relationship to the University and the Morningside Heights and Harlem communities at large and, therefore, the necessity of our action in support of an equitable expansion. To this end, we are committed to standing in solidarity with those most affected by the process of gentrification and to educating and mobilizing the student body towards a goal of greater University accountability. We support the local Community Board's framework for neighborhood development (the 197-A plan), a substantive Community Benefits Agreement, and a development process that puts the needs of local residents before the interests of the University.

SCEG was founded in the Fall of 2003 in response to the University's announcement of its plans for expansion.

## *What most people don't know:*

One common misconception about Columbia's expansion is that people are either completely for expansion or completely against it. In reality, the debates about expansion have more to do with how it takes place than whether it will take place. Almost no one, including West Harlemites, is against the expansion entirely. Everyone recognizes that expansion will happen in some form, but what SCEG and many of the people commonly seen as "against expansion" want is for expansion to take place in such a way that respects the lives and livelihoods of our neighbors.

Many people are also confused about the West Harlem community's adverse reaction to Columbia's plans—if they aren't against expansion, why do they seem to be so angry about the proposed expansion? We students got to campus about fifty years too late to understand why so many in the neighborhood mistrust the University. In the 1960s, during the wave of expansion that created East Campus, the International Affairs Building, the Law School, Plimpton, Ruggles, McBain, and the School of Social Work, nearly 10,000 people were evicted from their homes to make way for Columbia with virtually no

dialogue, no compromise, and no compensation. The well-known student protests of 1968 had much to do with Columbia's record as a landlord and a developer, and not only with the proposed gym in Morningside Park.

Even since 1968, though the University has indisputably changed its practices for the better, CU has converted more than 6000 units of privately held housing in the neighborhood into office space and student and faculty housing, giving many residents the impression that they are being squeezed out of their own communities. This is a history the University acknowledges to a certain extent but one that it refuses to take seriously as it moves forward with the current expansion plan. CU asks students and community residents to take them at their word when they say they will do things differently, but CU's past record is all we have to go on. This is one of the main reasons that SCEG pushes for increased transparency and accountability in the planning process, in order to ensure that the University does not make promises it will not keep.

## *SCEG Activities:*

- \* We educate ourselves by attending local Community Board meetings and learning about alternate plans for the neighborhood, such as the Community Board's 197-a plan, which emphasizes preserving affordable housing and good manufacturing jobs, among other key neighborhood issues.

- \* We organize informational events about Columbia's expansion so that students, faculty, and staff don't just get Columbia's side of the story. In the past, these have included faculty panels, lectures from community members and technical experts, and town halls.

- \* We organize press conferences, protests, and other actions that make our concerns known off-campus as well as on-campus and publicly put pressure on Columbia's administration.

- \* We sponsor Community-Student Dinners that seek to bring together Columbia students and residents of West Harlem so that we can get to know each other, talk about issues related to the expansion, and build a stronger movement to hold the University accountable.

- \* We work with the Student Council and other student groups to educate them and build coalitions around common causes.

- \* We conduct letter-writing campaigns and encourage student involvement in public hearings about Columbia's plan to try to influence the decisions of local government officials.

- \* This year SCEG is hosting an art exhibit to show different perspectives on the neighborhood's history and how it has changed.

## **Brought to you by the Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification:**

Email us at [sceg@columbia.edu](mailto:sceg@columbia.edu)

## **Notes**

### **Get Involved:**

- Visit our web site:  
[www.columbia.edu/cu/cssn/expansion](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cssn/expansion)
- Sign the petition for an accountable expansion on our website.
- Pass this booklet on to a friend.
- Write President Bollinger and the Trustees of Columbia and tell them how you feel about the expansion.
- Write your local city council representatives – they have the final say about what Columbia needs to do with its plan.
- Columbia's plan isn't official yet and can change. When the public hearings start, come out and make your beliefs heard.
- **Come to our weekly meetings at 5:30 PM in 405 Kent. All are welcome.**
- Talk to us. We're friendly.