

Locals bristle at plans for fourth NYU tower

BY ROLAND LI

New York University filed last Thursday with the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to seek approval to build a fourth tower on the landmarked Silver Towers site, officially beginning an extensive land-use approval process.

The tower is proposed to be 270,000 s/f and 38 stories, or around 400 feet, tall. The school announced earlier this year that it would seek up to six million square feet of new space, including up to three million square feet in the Greenwich Village area.

The school has insisted that it needs to expand in order to stay competitive and accommodate its

students and faculty.

"In the months since we released the NYU 2031 Strategy and unveiled the design, we have continued to refine our thinking, and are now ready to officially begin review of the project by public agencies," said NYU senior vice president Lynne Brown in a statement. "This is an extra step in the approvals process, but one that is worth taking."

Because the Silver Towers area, designed by I.M. Pei, was landmarked in 2008, NYU needs approval from the LPC before it can move forward in 2011 with a comprehensive Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), which would involve the local community

board, City Planning and eventually the City Council.

A spokeswoman for LPC said that a date for a public landmarks hearing had not yet been set, and there was

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— ANDREW BERMAN,
SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

currently no timetable for a decision to be made.

If the school does not receive landmarks approval, it will instead look to build a tower on the current

site of a Morton Williams supermarket, outside of the landmarked area. However, NYU is prohibited from building on the Silver Towers superblock until 2021 based on urban renewal deed restrictions, which the school is trying to get waived, along with seeking additional zoning variances.

During numerous Community Board 2 meetings this year, Greenwich Village residents have sharply criticized the plans, citing concerns over density and traffic congestion, and accused NYU of taking over the Village. A number of local groups oppose the school's proposals to

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build on either Silver Towers or the Morton William site. "Both of them are bad plans. And the fact that they have two bad plans doesn't make either plan any better," said Andrew Berman, executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. The group has called for the school to look for space outside of the Village, including strongly advocating for the Financial District.

"This is clearly not appropriate," he added. "Silver Towers needs a fourth tower like a fish needs a bicycle."



The proposed Silver Towers