

COLUMBIA'S EXPANSION INTO WEST HARLEM: IN WHOSE INTEREST?

WHAT IS COLUMBIA'S PLAN?

Columbia has announced that it will expand its facilities into an area of West Harlem known as Manhattanville, which stretches from 125th to 133rd streets west of Broadway.

The university has a history of displacing residents by buying up residential property for student and faculty housing. The administration says Manhattanville is underdeveloped and underoccupied, but **there have not been adequate guarantees that people who are being displaced will receive substantial assistance or compensation and that development will make community needs as central as university interests.**

WHAT IS GENTRIFICATION, AND HOW IS COLUMBIA IMPLICATED IN IT?

"Gentrification is the process by which poor and working-class neighborhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters—neighborhoods that previously experienced disinvestment and a middle-class exodus" (Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*).

The gentrification of Harlem is a broad, longterm trend in the urban landscape. If Harlem's current residents can't participate in Columbia's economic and residential developments there, they will be pushed out instead.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY SAYING?

In an open letter addressing the creation of the Community Advisory Committee, the Coalition to Preserve Community (CPC) has called Columbia's efforts at community inclusion, "a sophisticated, well-heeled public relations operation that functioned to provide **the appearance of community input in order to avoid having to address the destructive consequences of Columbia's continued unrestrained expansion.**"

WHAT IS THE STUDENT COALITION?

We are working from the following **mission statement**—and hoping that community residents will give us additional feedback about how students can best support their needs and concerns:

University expansion and gentrification are processes that affect everyone in our community. As students we recognize our unique position in relationship to the university and community at large, and simultaneously, the necessity of our action in support of an equitable and just conclusion. To this end, we are unified in our commitment to continue to work and stand in solidarity with those most affected by the process of gentrification, and in our commitment to educate and mobilize the student body towards a goal of greater university accountability.

WHY DOES THE REZONING PROCESS MATTER?

- Manhattanville is currently zoned for **light manufacturing**, so a range of manufacturing work is legal there.

- Columbia is asking the New York City government to rezone the area for **mixed use**, which "encourage[s] investment in mixed residential and industrial neighborhoods by permitting expansion and new development in a wide variety of uses" (nyc.gov).

- Tenants' rights activists and urban planners warn that "**mixed use**" zoning is often a euphemism for **gentrification** because it encourages the development of trendy retail and refurbished residential space. Universities gentrify by infusing neighborhoods with private capital, displacing longtime residents and **changing the character and affordability of the community.**

HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE THIS PROCESS?

Find the Student Coalition in Hartley Hall at 7:00pm every Sunday or online at www.columbia.edu/cu/cssn/expansion.