

THE EXPANSION TIMELINE:

2002 and beyond....

Fall 2002 Columbia University announces 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 begins to meet in St. Mary's Church of Harlem to organize against Columbia's expansion plans. The group mobilizes 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 comes 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 forms three “advisory” groups to which it presents expansion plans. The student advisory group meets a total of two times that semester, and student input is not solicited.

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

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

April 2004 Columbia formally releases 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 will concretely benefit the current residents.

June 2004 Columbia dismantles its Community Advisory Board -- just as the board completes 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 -- step down from their positions.

Fall 2004 Community Board 9 completes 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 meets 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).

April 2005 The Columbia Spectator exposes 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 hold a tent city, dubbed “Bollingerville,” on College Walk that promotes dialogue with those most affected by CU's expansion.

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

October 2005 Announcement by Mayor Bloomberg of 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 New York City Planning Commission holds a public hearing on Columbia's Environmental Impact Statement were against Columbia's proposal, the first time that has happened in City Planning history.

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's representing.

August 2006 Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), the states leading economic development agency, begins a Neighborhood Conditions Study, a study that could find the expansion area blighted. If the region is found blighted, the state of NY would 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 was funneling the ESDC \$300,000 per year of study.

October 2006 The University publicly launched its capital campaign Friday by asking for \$4 billion from its alumni—the largest fund-raising goal in American university history.

October 2006 The West Harlem Local Development Corporation votes not to take eminent domain off the table as a prerequisite for negotiating its Community Benefits Agreement with Columbia and the City. The decision sparks 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 sues 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 announces the temporary placement of Columbia Secondary (the magnet Middle School) at PS 36, a small elementary (K-2) school on Amsterdam Ave between 122nd and 123rd. This decision was made without consulting the community. Parents, residents and students lead protests against the decision.

January 2007 The Columbia Spectator obtains the University's General Project Plan for the expansion and reports 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 comes before the blight study (funded by Columbia) has been completed and is the clearest statement yet of the University's intentions/willingness to utilize eminent domain.

February 2007 The Department of Education announces 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 125th and B'way.

March 2007 Columbia announces its first eviction of a tenant on University-owned land in the expansion zone, citing non-payment of rent. The tenant, Broadway Auto Center at 3251 Broadway, argues that it does not owe as much as Columbia claims it does (\$39,000, as opposed to \$117,000) and that Columbia erected scaffolding that blocked the storefront from view thus decreasing its business, as well as failed to make promised repairs. The tenant's lawyer has asked the LDC to postpone the eviction and continue negotiating.

Coming Soon: Columbia and the Community are waiting to hear back from the City Planning Agency about its review of the Environmental Impact Statement, which included a side-by-side evaluation of the 197-c and 197-a plans (Columbia's and CB9's, respectively). The time when this review will be completed is unknown. Following this review, Columbia's plan will be reviewed through ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Process). This Process will examine and vote on each plan's proposal for the rezoning of Manhattanville.

For more information, email sceg@columbia.edu, visit the website at www.columbia.edu/cu/cssn/expansion or come to a meeting – every Sunday at 5:30 in 405 Kent.