

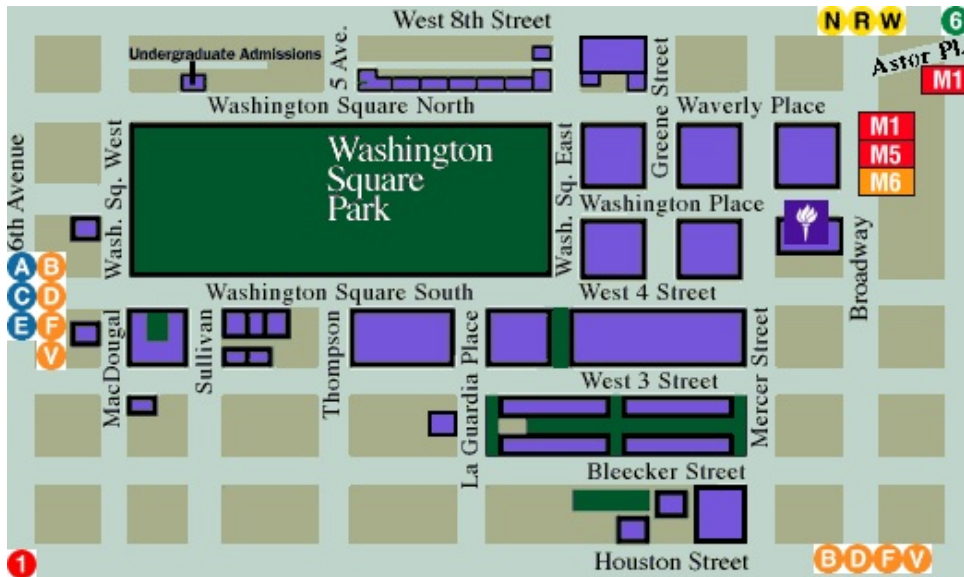


NYU's Big Sustainability Move

Posted by [Glenn](#) on October 6, 2006 - 6:11pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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In a sign that New York City is becoming a real leader in environmental sustainability, [New York University announced a major sustainability drive](#) called "NYU Green Action Plan" (GAP). This initiative will include buying wind power, expanding its recycling efforts, improving energy efficiency, incorporating green building best practices into new buildings and renovations, expanding its bike parking options and establishing an educational program for environmental studies.

A student group called "Green Arch Initiative" actively lobbied the University staff, faculty and student body for over a year to make environmental sustainability a priority.

Jeremy Friedman, co-president of the NYU Green Arch Initiative and a senior in Gallatin, has been working since last February to raise awareness about environmental sustainability at NYU.

"I literally have tears in my eyes," said Friedman, who was also at the meeting.

In September 2005, the Green Arch Initiative began discussing the issue with NYU administrators.

"Reaching out made them more aware that it was a really important issue to the student body," said Green Arch Initiative co-president Lindsay Robbins.

The group spoke with students, faculty and administrators and soon discovered that many members of the NYU community felt similarly about NYU's role in helping protect the environment.

"From that point on, it started snowballing," Friedman said. "With this kind of pace, we don't have to catch up -- we can leapfrog."

According to a post from ["It's the Environment Stupid"](#) which interviewed Green Arch's Friedman:

They're an organization that wants to wind up obsolete, because when that happens they'll have accomplished their task (or mission): *to develop NYU as a leader in urban environmental scholarship and practice, furthering our reputation as a "private university in the public service."*

Here was a quote from the [press release](#) by NYU's executive vice president Dr. Alfano on why they are undertaking this initiative now:

"We are all familiar with the increasing pressures from the burning of fossil fuels that risk our health, compromise our national security, and imperil the planet. This purchase of renewable energy, our pursuit of greater conservation, and the promise of a more sustainable campus are institutional responsibilities, consistent with our community's values and made more relevant by the [Mayor's recent announcement of an ambitious environmental agenda](#) for New York City, of which NYU wants to be a part. Cities and universities share an important characteristic - they are the places that draw in mankind to confront, contemplate, and address our most pressing challenges. It is in that spirit that we take this step."

The wind power purchase of 118 million kilowatt hours from Community Energy, is equal to it's current energy consumption level. It will be the largest purchase of wind power by any U.S. college or university, according to the EPA's Green Power Partnership Program, the largest purchase of wind power by any institution in New York City, and the 11th largest purchase nationally.

According to the [NYU press release](#), this new drive for sustainability is not only a product of student lobbying and Mayor Bloomberg's big sustainability drive, but also Bill Clinton's "Global Initiative" on Climate Change. NYU President Sexton:

"Last month, I participated in the Clinton Global Initiative conference here in New York, where global warming was a key issue under discussion. It was a sobering dialogue, one that has caused me to think even more deeply about what role universities in general, and NYU in particular, should play in addressing the great challenges of our time, from climate change to extremist violence to poverty. The full nature of those responsibilities will only emerge, I believe, out of a long discussion on our campus involving students, faculty, and administrators. But, in the meantime, this decision - which will lead to more electricity being added to the grid from clean sources, rather than from fossil fuel sources - is an important step for our campus to take."

Aside from the simply "doing good" for the planet, this move is clearly a way for NYU to further differentiate itself in the competitive yearly race for the best high school graduates. In addition to boosting it's image nationally as a leader on environmental issues, NYU ups the ante with it's major local competitor: Columbia University. Columbia University's Earth Institute was selected by the Bloomberg Administration as the key scientific advisors to it's new [Office of Sustainability and Long Term Planning](#).

Let the competition begin for NYC's most sustainable university continue...



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