

NYU IN CONEY

urban design

Lesson Plan

STUDENTS SKETCH A STRATEGY FOR REBUILDING CONEY ISLAND

by Alyson Krueger / GSAS '12



A SKETCH OF CONEY ISLAND'S INFRASTRUCTURE AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS FOLLOWING HURRICANE SANDY'S UPHEAVAL.



On a wintry Saturday mere months after Hurricane Sandy, when businesses were still shuttered and homes uninhabitable, representatives from the mayor's office

were out at Coney Island distributing hot dogs and hamburgers. The hurricane had washed out the neighborhood's homes, playgrounds, and shoreline, and soon after, the community had been inundated with well-intentioned

outsiders: government officials carrying FEMA forms and volunteers passing out blankets and bottles of water. But this dreary Saturday had also drawn another group of do-gooders—students from NYU's Schack Institute

of Real Estate at the School of Continuing and Professional Studies. They weren't there to hand out supplies, or even to listen to residents reminisce about easier days. Instead they'd gathered with more than three dozen Coney Island residents—from the owner of the local bodega to students from a high school social studies class—to lead a weeklong workshop on practical steps for rebuilding.

Residents lamented the lack of express trains to Manhattan and how their water supply was vulnerable to contamination. (In January, they were still drinking bottled water.) They also longed for the return of businesses on the boardwalk and more free recreational activities for their bored teenagers. The NYU students took these issues and designed a plan that not only galvanized an anxious community but offered concrete steps for how the neighborhood could be improved in the long run—something government officials didn't have the luxury to consider so soon after the disaster. "The city was still really focused on what they had to do right [then], which was to get the street cleared, get the cars out that were completely flooded," notes Richard Barga (SCPS '13), a student who participated in the workshop.

To its credit, the city listened. "This was one of the first documents of its kind out there in one of the impacted neighborhoods," says Nate Bliss (SCPS '09, '11), a representative from the city's Economic Development Corporation. "And it's been among the documents that are influencing the conversation that is ongoing about how to repair the [area]." Bliss was struck by students' ideas on what to do with Coney Island Creek, an underdeveloped inlet prone to massive flooding: "[This] led to a conversation about what Coney Island Creek is used for, its vulnerability, and how it might be

PHOTOS COURTESY NYU SCHACK INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE



STUDENTS FROM THE SCHACK INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE LEAD A WORKSHOP WITH CONEY ISLAND LOCALS ON PRACTICAL STEPS FOR REBUILDING THEIR COASTAL NEIGHBORHOOD.

strengthened and become an asset to the community."

Fresh out of classes on construction management, real estate development, and real estate finance, the students had the skills and knowledge to imagine how the neighborhood could be built better. And they had the right guidance in Corinne Packard, who had previously worked on large redevelopment projects for the city and, for the past three years, has taught a course at Schack on post-catastrophe reconstruction, where students worked on the ground in other distressed places, such as Haiti and Sri Lanka.

"[Students] take this class because they realize they are learning a set of skills that can be applied to real communities in

need, as opposed to just learning how to build, you know, office buildings in midtown Manhattan," Packard explains.

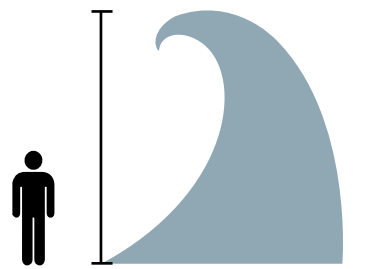
After the success of the winter workshop, Packard paired students with members of NYC's Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency, the task force that Mayor Michael Bloomberg appointed in December 2012 to prepare the city for natural disasters in the future. Some of the students' ideas—such as lowering the cost of insurance if buildings complied with resiliency measures in flood-prone areas—appeared in the final report released in mid-June.

Though the class is long over, student Barga says, only half jokingly: "We're here if [the city] needs more ideas!" ■

impact

SANDY STATS

Storm Surge at Battery Park City: 14 Feet



Cost to NJ: \$29 Billion

Cost to NY: \$32 Billion

40,000 NYC Residents Displaced

161,000 New Jerseyans Displaced



THE PHOENIX ON FIRST

NOT EVEN A HISTORIC STORM COULD SHUTTER
NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER FOR LONG

by Nicole Pezold / GSAS '04



On the October night that Hurricane Sandy rushed into New York City, Paul Schwabacher, the senior vice president of facilities management for NYU Langone Medical Center, was hunkered down with his team in a makeshift command center on First Avenue and 30th Street. In the preceding days, the facilities team had prepared for the storm much like they did for Hurricane Irene, bringing in water pumps and additional fuel oil, and sealing up low-lying areas with plywood, plastic, and sandbags. As a 14-foot surge pushed its way up the East River, Schwabacher was monitoring the campus's perimeter and basements via security cameras.

"First thing that happened, I saw the video go out," he remembers. Some of the lights and power systems began to shut off. Schwabacher ran down to the basement. Water was pouring in—eventually 15 million gallons would fill the buildings just on the superblock that runs along First Avenue in the low 30s.

"It felt like a movie set," he says.

All the world (or at least those with power) watched what happened next: An orderly, if surreal, evacuation of patients to 14 area hospitals on higher ground, including the delicate transfer of 20 infants from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit by a team of heroic nurses. More than 300 patients were safely evacuated over the course of 13 hours.

In the light of the next days, NYU Langone surveyed the destruction. Its mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems had suffered extensive damage; some state-of-the-art equipment—such as MRIs, a gamma knife used for brain surgery, and a linear accelerator used for the treatment of cancer—was also destroyed. But more than just equipment was lost. Thousands of laboratory mice perished; refrigerated tissue samples and other temperature-sensitive materials spoiled. Class and research spaces were damaged. A premier academic medical center was bowed before Mother Nature.

It was, perhaps, its lowest point in nearly two centuries, which makes its breakneck rebound all the more astounding.

Immediately, the medical center got to work, with the aid of \$150 million from FEMA and around-the-clock crews, who for a time only stopped for meals and sleep. A week after the storm, the outpatient facilities were back in business. Another two weeks later, they opened one of the main buildings, Skirball Institute, and a month after that, Tisch Hospital itself. By mid-January, a mere two-and-a-half months after the storm, the campus was essentially fully operational. "That was the goal," Schwabacher says, "to reopen the doors, reopen for business again as fast as possible."

When Sandy hit, NYU Langone's complex was already in the midst of a major capital development program to construct new energy, hospital, and science buildings, as well as an overhaul of the Emergency Department. (The ED remains closed until the reno-

WITH AN EYE TOWARD CLIMATE CHANGE AND RISING SEAS, NYU LANGONE WILL PROTECT ITS EAST RIVER CAMPUS TO MORE THAN SEVEN FEET ABOVE SANDY'S RECORD SURGE.

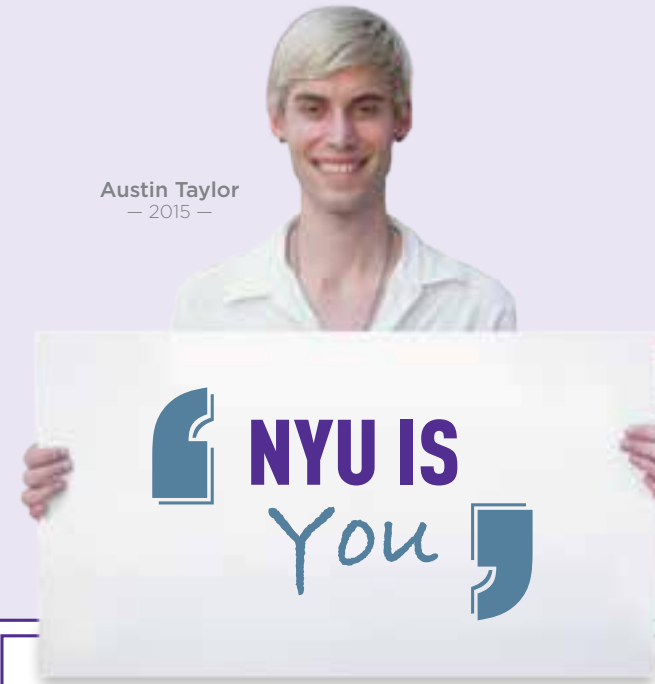
vation is complete in early 2014; in the meantime, the medical center has opened an urgent-care center to serve the public.) The buildings, which include a new co-generation power plant, were already designed with an eye toward rising sea levels and the more virulent storms predicted with climate change by locating all critical systems above the 500-year flood level. Here was an opportunity to go even further. The goal now is to protect the campus to two feet beyond that—and critical infrastructure to at least six feet higher—to a level seven to 11 feet higher than Sandy. Buildings surrounding the main campus will also be outfitted with barriers that can flip into place and act as bulwarks.

There's good news for Sandy's tiniest survivors, too. Some 54 cages of mice were rescued and have been outfitted with a new above-ground colony, which is only a recent innovation for these types of facilities. "Traditional wisdom dictates that you put colonies in the basement," explains neuroscientist, physiologist, and cell biologist Gordon Fishell, because of the heavy machinery and copious flow of water required to keep the space pathogen free, among other factors. So the mice, which are genetically altered to help doctors better understand everything from cancer to heart disease, are making their own rebound, alongside the students, post-docs, and colleagues who study them.

Fishell's lab focuses on seizures, and he says their work never truly slowed, and predicts the same for the university. "If you look at NYU Langone's output and performance in five years, by any measures, you'd be hard-pressed to know this hit us," Fishell explains. "And that really speaks to the strength of the comeback, the dedication of everyone here." ■

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BEST OF NEW YORK

NYU FACULTY, STAFF, AND ALUMNI OFFER UP THEIR FAVORITES

by Renée Alfuso / CAS '06



MEDIEVAL TIMES

Stay on the A train long enough and it will transport you back to the Middle Ages, which endures atop a hill in Fort Tryon Park, thanks to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. **The Cloisters** houses the art of medieval Europe in a building assembled from architectural elements

dating between the 12th and 15th centuries, so the setting itself is part of the collection. "When you visit the Cloisters, you get a vivid sense of medieval European culture in a way not possible anywhere else in this country," explains Kathryn A. Smith, an associate profes-

sor of medieval art and chair of the art history department.

Opened to the public in 1938, the Cloisters features around 2,000 works ranging from sculpture and stained glass to rare frescoes and manuscript illumina-

tion. Smith (IFA '89, '96) particularly loves the Treasury with its array of jewelry and precious objects in gold, silver, ivory, and silk, while the museum's most renowned pieces are *The Unicorn Tapestries*, which she says are "widely considered among the most beautiful of surviving sets of medieval tapestries." Outside, the "absolutely gorgeous" monastic cloister gardens showcase more than 250 species of plants and herbs that were cultivated in the Middle Ages. Overlooking the Hudson River, the Cloisters offers majestic views and a rare sense of serenity that make it hard to believe that you are, as Smith notes, "in the midst of one of the world's busiest and noisiest cities."

99 MARGARET CORBIN DRIVE, 212-923-3700; WWW.METMUSEUM.ORG/VISIT/VISITTHE-CLOISTERS

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK; COURTESY POPBAR; COURTESY CITY BAKERY; COURTESY THE MCNTRICK HOTEL; COURTESY BREWSKEEBALL



COLD REMEDY

Why settle for packets of powdered cocoa when there's hot chocolate on a stick? West Village gelateria **Popbar** serves all its frozen treats as popsicles, but when temperatures drop, their do-it-yourself hot chocolate offers a unique way to warm up. Stir a cube of dark, milk, or white

chocolate into a cup of frothy steamed milk for instant cocoa that's never grainy or watered down. Or for a mug of something even more indulgent, chocoholic Sarah Jin (TSOA '16) says that nothing beats **City Bakery** and its giant homemade marshmallows.

"It's the most decadent hot chocolate I've ever had," she attests. "It tastes like melted chocolate with a little bit of milk." City Bakery's annual hot chocolate festival also features a different flavor each day of the month—from chili pepper or banana peel to ginger or black rum and



cinnamon. And with specialties like the Moulain Rouge (made with espresso, pomegranate, and lemon) and Sunken Treasure (with chocolate truffles and caramel coins at the bottom), its February calendar of flavors offers weary Manhattanites something to celebrate during the long winter.

5 CARMINE STREET AT SIXTH AVENUE, 212-255-4874; WWW.POP-BAR.COM

3 WEST 18TH STREET, 212-366-1414; WWW.THECITYBAKERY.COM

Sip some one-of-a-kind cocoa or dare to visit a highbrow haunted house

GAME NIGHT

The best way to feel like a kid again in a 21-and-over crowd is with a trip to **Full Circle Bar**, where skee-ball and craft beer go hand in hand. The Williamsburg dive features refurbished arcade machines from Coney Island and 50 varieties of canned beer that make it easy to drink and play at the same time. "Skee-ball is faster and less involved than other bar games, so you're not stuck playing a game of pool for half an hour—the satisfaction is quicker," says NYU Account Coordinator Katie Pulles, who trounced this magazine's editor-in-chief during a recent match there.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays the skee-ball is free, along with jumbo pretzels and hot dogs topped with jalapeño ketchup. Full Circle is also home to the sport's first-ever competitive league, which the own-

ers dubbed Brewskee-Ball upon its inception in 2005. But Pulles (CAS '11) skips the tournament action for a more laid-back approach: "When we play we make up drinking games with rules, like you have to spin around first or stand on one foot when you throw. It makes it even more challenging to hit that 100 pocket."

318 GRAND STREET IN BROOKLYN, 347-725-4588; WWW.FULLCIRCLEBAR.COM



EDITORS' PICK: TRICK AND TREAT

NYU Alumni Magazine Research Chief David Cohen is a theater aficionado who's seen it all—more than 250 shows in just the past three years—but even he was amazed by the immersive world of **Sleep No More**. Not to be confined to a stage, this production is a spooky choose-your-own adventure game—an abstract, twisted incarnation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* performed inside a haunted house disguised as a Jazz Age hotel. Visitors are given Venetian-style masks to wear as they explore six floors of dark drama and mayhem at their own pace, voyeuristically following their favorite characters from room to room. "The desire to see it all will keep you running up and down stairs," Cohen explains, resulting in "an experience that assaults and rewards the senses as it leaves you overwhelmed."

Actors Neil Patrick Harris, Alan Cumming, and Evan Rachel Wood have all turned up for guest performances, none of which are ever the same. And Cohen was especially taken with the painstaking detail throughout the fictional 1930s hotel, which boasts more than 100 rooms filled with cryptic clues, trunks to rifle through, and objects that spring to life without warning. "I usually like to be left alone in a comfortable seat when I go out to the theater, but *Sleep No More* was quite the exception to this rule," he says. "My adrenaline was flowing, and the three hours flew by."

530 WEST 27TH STREET, 866-811-4111; WWW.SLEEPNOMORENYC.COM



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