Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting  
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 9, 2014


Members not in attendance: Angela Kamer, Julia O’Connor

1. Comments from Chair

   Committee Chair Larry Maslon provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda and reminded the group that their feedback is needed to provide a mechanism for addressing stewardship issues on the Superblocks in a meaningful and informed manner.

2. Status Update on Architect RFQ and RFP Processes

   Senior Director Kenny Lee noted that fifteen out of the sixteen firms that were invited to submit qualifications have submitted responses. Electronic copies of the responses will be made available to the Committee members by June 11. Feedback on the proposals was requested in advance of the June 19 meeting, when the Committee will discuss them.

   Lee also noted that the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the architect was in the process of being drafted and would be shared with the Committee by Monday, June 16. He asked that comments on that draft be sent to Larry Maslon by June 24 for compilation and final review at the June 26 meeting.

3. Process and Timeline for Selection of Independent Consultant

   Lee shared a list of firms, which was shared with the group in advance of the meeting, that appear to be qualified to fulfill the duties of the independent consultant, based on the guidelines set forth in the University Space Priorities Working Group Final Report. Members were asked to review the list of and provide feedback on the guiding principles that would inform the drafting of an RFQ.
In response, members emphasized the need for the firm undertaking this set of responsibilities to be independent—keeping with the intentions of the USPWG. One way of accomplishing this, they noted, was to consider not retaining firms that have had prior experience working on NYU projects. The Committee advised that the RFQ should ascertain firms’ previous NYU experience in order to evaluate their independence during the subsequent RFP and selection phases.

Members of the Committee also agreed that a firm’s capacity to build and leverage a team—either internally or by partnering with another entity—was an important criterion to ensure that the task of evaluating the multi-faceted and complex Restrictive Declaration was adequately accomplished.

Lee indicated that an RFQ document would be drafted and shared with this Committee at its June 19 meeting, with feedback requested by the end of June to facilitate its release soon thereafter.

4. Overview of Design and Construction Process

Kenny Lee shared a conceptual overview of the proposed phases of the design and construction processes. He emphasized that the phases indicated are only approximate representations so as to help the Committee understand the overall progression of the project.

Lee noted that a construction manager will be engaged to help guide the project through these phases and ensure that scheduling and budgetary goals are met. The phases, he said, are not necessarily consecutive and that it may be possible to undertake multiple project phases concurrently.

The demolition and abatement processes were discussed. Lee noted that abatement would likely be done while the building is still enclosed (e.g. removal of asbestos), with the building out of service during this period. After abatement, demolition of the structure would commence. It is anticipated that demolition would be undertaken manually.

5. Focus on Stewardship Clarification of Staffing Capacity and Lines of Responsibility in Faculty Housing

In response to the University Space Priorities Working Group’s request, Beth Morningstar provided an overview of the organizational structure of the Office of Faculty Housing within the Division of Operations. She distributed a chart showing contact information for various needs/questions related to faculty housing (i.e., leasing, maintenance, etc.) and asked for Committee’s feedback. Suggestions for clarifying the information were made and agreed upon by the Committee. The memorandum and
contact sheet will be distributed to the residents of NYU faculty housing, Morningstar noted.

One change, Morningstar emphasized, has been the reorientation of the functionality of the Client Services Center (CSC). Previously, the CSC—and the resolution of the issues that it is designed to collect and service—was the responsibility of Cushman & Wakefield. Now, Morningstar said, the CSC is operated and managed by NYU Operations to provide an improved level of oversight and responsiveness.

A different plan, which was outlined in the Restrictive Declaration, will be put in place for handling construction-specific issues.

6. Stewardship Issues

Chair Larry Maslon emphasized the Committee’s role to also provide input on ongoing quality-of-life issues on the Superblocks. He asked the Committee members to bring particular issues for discussion at the next meeting on June 19.

7. Discussion: James Russell, Architecture Critic for Bloomberg News

James Russell, architecture critic for Bloomberg News, offered his thoughts to the Committee about architectural considerations in the academic sphere, with an emphasis on enumerating the things that make a building successful. He asserted that NYU has in the past seemed challenged in meeting the twin goals of functionality and aesthetic quality in its buildings.

NYU should, Russell suggested, consider such aspects as scale, bulk, contextual design, the need for cross-disciplinary interaction, and “light and air” concerns in the design of a new building. He further suggested that the myriad “clients” should be defined—not just the University overall, but also faculty, students, prospective faculty, other building users, the neighborhood, the city, etc. Upon his advice, the book For an Architecture of Reality by Michael Benedikt was provided to each Committee member.

8. Confirmation of Next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on June 19 at 4:00 p.m. in the President’s Conference Room.