Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 15, 2014

Members in Attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Rachel Belsky, Lynne Brown, Sewin Chan, Franklin Diaz, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Angela Kamer, Larry Maslon (chair), Allen Mincer, Beth Morningstar, Michael Patullo, Eero Simoncelli, Rosemary Scanlon, Heather Skolnick

Members not in attendance: Jeff Goodwin, Julia O’Connor

1. Comments from the Chair

Chair Larry Maslon began the meeting by asking for feedback on the process of finalizing the architect RFP, which was released on July 7, and by recounting the constraints on the Coles Redevelopment Building as a result of ULURP approvals. One member asked if there would have been any significant differences in the Working Group’s recommendations had the constraints of the ULURP been more fully recognized. Maslon and other members of the USPWG did not think this was the case, and indicated that the recommendations were constructed as priorities, which still remain. Maslon confirmed that the USPWG had approached their task from a programmatic, rather than square footage, standpoint.

In discussing the role of the Committee going forward, Maslon noted that the SSAC represents a new model for NYU and must fulfill its mission to hear and raise the concerns of constituents. Lynne Brown affirmed that the committee would have a highly influential role in providing input on the project going forward. Maslon acknowledged that the Committee is one, albeit an influential one, of many stakeholders in the process but that it could not be expected to be the sole source of guidance to the University. Maslon solicited comments from the members and no objections or clarifications were raised.

At the Chair’s request, Brown then provided an overview of the architect selection and programming processes as they are scheduled to unfold over the next several weeks/months:

- The RFP has been issued to six architect firms; responses are expected back by mid August.
- The Committee will have the opportunity to review the responses and provide input on a short-list of firms (three or four) that will be invited to give presentations to a large group, including the Committee.
- The University Leadership will make the final decision on architect selection.
Prior to the selection of an architect, Brown noted, members of the Project Team will convene groups of building users to further determine the space program, working within the parameters set by both the City and the USPWG.

The Committee then discussed the roles of project stakeholder and building client. Maslon suggested that the Committee itself is not a client; rather the clients are the building’s users—faculty, residents, students, etc. Brown agreed and noted, most broadly NYU is the client and the architect is responsible to NYU, but also to those who use the space. Maslon noted that it is not the duty of the Committee to argue beyond the recommendations set out, nor to negotiate cost. Maslon also requested that the Committee think about how final designs for the building are presented to the community, both internally and externally.

2. Independent Consultant Next Steps

Kenny Lee noted that the RFQ for the independent consultant was sent out and responses are expected in late July. Once received, the responses will be shared with the Committee. A matrix to help evaluate the qualifications, along with a draft RFP, was distributed to members for comment. Input on the RFQ responses/RFP draft will be discussed at the next meeting in late August.

3. Next Steps For Evaluating Architect RFP Responses

Kenny Lee distributed a matrix for evaluating the architect’s proposals based on the guiding principles set forth at the outset of the architect selection process. Proposals are due on August 15th, at which time they will be sent electronically to the Committee for review and be made available in hard copy. The Committee, Lee noted, is expected to meet in late August to provide input further narrowing the list of firms and preparing for the interviews, which will take place in mid September.

Brown noted that the Committee members would be invited to the architect presentations, as well as representatives from several other NYU stakeholder groups. Due to the number of individuals attending (predicted to be approximately 60 people), a smaller subset of attendees will serve as interlocutors—including one representative from the Stewardship Committee. All attendees, however, will be able to submit written feedback and questions for subsequent response and follow up.

4. Community Facility Requirement

In response to discussion at the previous meeting, Brown provided the full text of the “community facility” obligations as noted in the Restrictive Declaration. She noted that the requirement arose from discussions with Council Member Margaret Chin and mandates the inclusion of both a public atrium and space to be programmed for the local elderly community; combined, these facilities must be a minimum of 7,500 square feet.
The addition of such requirements, Brown noted, are common in the ULURP process as various points of review and input are needed to reach approval. This requirement, when compared to other potential projects that NYU could have been asked to undertake, is reasonable for a project of this size. Brown asserted that the architect will be responsible for incorporating the community facility space into the building plan. Brown noted that the supermarket is not a part of the ULURP-mandated community facility requirement.

5. Supermarket Options

Following the conversation at the previous meeting, Brown provided a brief overview of the options for locating a supermarket on the superblocks. She emphasized that the intention behind seeking approval to include a supermarket in the Coles Building was in response to the community’s strong preference for a continuously operating supermarket on the Silver Towers block. There is no formal requirement, however, to include a supermarket in the new Coles Building.

In response to an inquiry about whether the existing strip of NYU-owned retail stores on LaGuardia Place (on the Washington Square Village block) could be a suitable site for a supermarket, Brown indicated that the site is complicated for several reasons, including the need for loading and unloading to take place in the Washington Square Village interior courtyard, the lack of appropriate storage space, the high cost of renovating several small spaces into one cohesive supermarket, and the ill-suited floor plan. Further, Brown noted that the approved zoning envelope on the Morton Williams site does not allow for a supermarket in a new building there.

While a decision regarding the placement of the supermarket need not be reached at this meeting, Brown mentioned that locating it on the Coles site falls in line with the City’s goal of creating a pedestrian-activated area along a widened Greene Street walkway. Maslon noted that similar efforts, including one on Manhattan’s east side near 50th Street, have been successful. In addition, one member noted that the quality of the supermarket could have an effect of the receptiveness of the community to a supermarket on the Coles site.

6. Superblock Site Improvements

Lee introduced a series of proposed improvements to the superblocks to be implemented in stages. Some of the improvements are in direct response to questions or concerns raised by the Committee. Modest improvements (new plantings, power-washing, general clean up) are either already underway or are proceeding on an accelerated timeframe to begin in the next few weeks. Lee noted that improvements planned for Stage 1 include, but are not limited to, the following:

- WSV and ST windows replacement
- Open space improvements along LaGuardia Place and Bleecker Street
• Relocation of the Houston Mercer dog run
• Spruce up of WSV entries and lobbies

Subsequent improvements implemented in later stages could include: Washington Square Village North and South Walks—additions of sidewalks and trees to improve aesthetics and pedestrian flow; fence removal and sidewalk upgrades; and access to WSV from the currently gated entries from LaGuardia Place.

The timeline for the improvement projects was discussed. Lee affirmed that the window replacement project, which is very extensive and complex, is the first priority. Other projects, Lee noted, would be undertaken in phases so as to not be disrupted or undone by the window replacement work. It was also noted that some broad areas of interest (e.g., related to pets) would be raised at the policy level at future Committee meetings.

In addition to the site improvements, Beth Morningstar provided updates on several concerns raised by Committee members. She emphasized that the Client Services Center is the centralized point-of-contact for submitting work orders to resolve issues on the superblocks. The discussion included, but was not limited to, the following:

• Plantings behind CitiBank used by the Community Agriculture Club
• Maintenance of the Time Landscape
• Future use for the vacant units in the La Guardia retail strip (It was noted that academic uses have been planned for these spaces, including computer and technical labs.)
• Clean up and maintenance of the fenced corner areas on Mercer Street (It was noted that NYU needs permission from the Parks Department to gain access).
• Future use and cleaning of the former Blood Bank space at 2 Washington Square Village
• Use of interior driveways in Washington Square Village for apartment construction staging and storage
• Possibility of installing pedestrian crosswalk on Bleecker Street in front of 3 Washington Square Village
• Possibility of widening the diagonal walkway on the Silver Towers site (It was noted that any site changes would require approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission.)
• Replacement of broken outdoor light fixtures (It was noted that this project is pending the receipt of materials from a vendor.)