Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Thursday, August 28, 2014

Members in Attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Rachel Belsky, Lynne Brown, Sewin Chan, Jeff Goodwin, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Angela Kamer, Kenny Lee, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Beth Morningstar, Julia O’Connor, Michael Patullo, Rosemary Scanlon, Heather Skolnick, Eero Simoncelli

Members Not in Attendance: Franklin Diaz

1. Comments from the Chair

Chair Larry Maslon welcomed members back from and convened the meeting by thanking Committee members for their service. He asked that Senior VP Lynne Brown and Project Director Kenny Lee provide an overview of the evaluation process for the architect proposals and of the planned interviews. Of the six firms selected to receive the RFP, one firm dropped out, leaving five responders. The analysis of the project team was that none of the remaining five emerged as either presumptively stronger or weaker compared to each other and so the recommendation was to invite all five to the “presentation” stage of review.

2. Discussion: Review and evaluation of architect RFP responses

Larry Maslon encouraged the Committee to review all of the proposals submitted by the architects in detail prior to the interviews in mid-September. Kenny Lee then described the format of the interviews: each firm will be allotted 40 minutes for a presentation and must allow for 30 minutes of questions from the interlocutors. He noted that each firm will be asked to provide examples of two projects they feel best exemplifies their planned approach to the Coles Redevelopment Building and comment on their vision. The Committee expressed a desire to have the presentations focus more on the vision for the project than on past projects; Lee agreed to convey this to the firms. Firms will also be asked to bring their performing arts consultants, Lee said, and also will be asked to feature the team member who will be responsible for communications with the community in the presentation.

Lynne Brown indicated that nine interlocutors have been designated; Maslon will represent the SSAC in this role. As observers, members of the Committee will be invited to submit written feedback following the presentations to Maslon or Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Patullo. Following the interviews, feedback will be collected and used to help inform the decisions of the leadership group.
Maslon invited Committee members to pose ideas for possible questions from the SSAC during the presentation/interview process. Members suggested queries on the following themes:

- Mitigating effects of the building’s size (e.g., shadow, traffic, views, etc.)
- Internal and external trade offs in meeting competing needs for space
- Accessibility of block and building to students and other constituencies
- Design flexibility to meet the needs of various stakeholders
- Flow of traffic on the site, and into and out of the building itself
- Engagement and communication with the community

Maslon encouraged members, in reviewing the proposals, to observe how the architects present their ideas and in particular how they convey their understanding of NYU’s various communities (including this Committee) and public spaces. He also noted that, some firms seemed more willing than others to elaborate on their vision and understanding of the ambitious design and functional aspirations for this project.

Cautioning the Committee, Maslon noted that if members dislike a particular design element from a particular firm’s previous project, they should remember that the architects may have been driven by that client’s wishes—what the Committee may dislike may be exactly what that client wanted—so there is a need to be prepared to ask questions to determine how design decisions were made in such cases.

The point was also made that an important factor is how the actual occupants and users of a building feel about the design and functionality of what an architect has delivered to them.

Committee members were encouraged to offer additional ideas and input on potential questions to be offered by Maslon on behalf of the Committee via email to Michael Patullo.

3. Superblock improvements progress report

Kenny Lee presented images of several “quality of life” improvements, based on Committee members’ suggestions that have recently been completed on the Superblocks. These include:

- Removal of certain fences
- Installing new plantings in the Sasaki Garden and near the Washington Square Village lobby entries
- Trimming of hedges, removal of ivy, and other general landscape maintenance at various sites, including the corner gardens on Mercer Street
Lee noted that positive feedback from the community was received in response to these improvements.

Members raised additional questions with regard to the plantings in the Sasaki Garden. It was agreed that the SSAC would be asked to provide input on a landscape plan for the Garden with input from Ann Hearn on behalf of the Washington Square Village Garden Committee.

4. **Window replacement update**

Communications Manager Heather Skolnick provided a status update on the window replacement project for Washington Square Village and Silver Towers. She noted that the first phase of this project—the installation of new windows for residents of Washington Square Village #3 & #4—will commence this fall. Residents of those buildings will receive communication about the schedule in advance of its implementation.

During the window replacement in Washington Square Village, Kenny Lee explained that a pedestrian bridge and scaffolding will be erected beginning in mid-October. This scaffolding must be extensive, he said, in order to meet code requirements. The sidewalk protection, Lee noted, would be taken down as soon as the project finishes.

One member inquired about the installation of air conditioning covers. It was noted that covers in Washington Square Village would be installed at the same time as the replacement windows.

Regarding Silver Towers, window measurements and installation are expected to begin in the fall once approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission is obtained. It was noted that the new PTAC units will not protrude on the interior any further past the current configuration.

5. **Gym replacement update**

Michael Patullo provided an overview of the plan to meet the sports and recreation needs while Coles is unavailable. He detailed the strategy to meet those needs and progress made to date. The needs to be met include general fitness (i.e., fitness and strength training equipment, as well as recreation classes), specialty fitness (including the pool and courts), and spaces for intercollegiate athletics and intramural clubs to practice and compete. Each of these areas, Patullo emphasized, requires a tailored solution.

He then provided updates on the strategy and progress to date in each of these areas of need:

- **General Fitness:** Planning for a temporary fitness center in the NYU campus core is underway. All students and current paying members of Coles (save for community members) will have the ability to join that facility—which will also grant access to
the fitness centers at the Palladium and in Brooklyn—for a 20% discount off the current price of Coles. In addition, eligible employee members will have the opportunity to receive a partial reimbursement to help defray the cost of an external gym membership, should they choose to forgo membership at the NYU facilities. Conversations are underway with potential partner fitness centers.

- **Specialty Fitness:** Several local facilities are being considered as options for pool users; discussions with these facilities are currently underway. Some external options will be available for court users; students will have the ability to join the squash club. The courts at the Palladium and in Brooklyn will be kept as open as possible for free play. This category presents the toughest challenge in finding alternatives, given their specialized nature and relative scarcity in New York.

- **Intercollegiate Athletics:** It is anticipated that the Basketball and Volleyball teams will practice and hold competitions at local colleges. Discussions with these schools are ongoing. Wrestling and Fencing will be accommodated in the Palladium, along with the Varsity Performance Center, team meeting rooms, and equipment distribution.

- **Intramural Sports:** Intramural sports will be met with a combination of extending arrangements with existing nearby venues and exploring new ones. Conversations are ongoing with several facilities to secure court time for intramurals.

It was indicated that communications about these various efforts would be released as soon as plans are finalized. In addition, Patullo noted that the same update was given to the Coles Advisory Committee the previous week and that consultation with that group about the plan for meeting sports and recreation needs is ongoing.

**6. Fall meeting schedule**

Committee members were asked to provide their schedules of availability for the Fall semester so that a meeting schedule can be drafted. It is expected that the Committee will hold standing bi-weekly meetings for the next semester.