Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 18, 2014

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

Members Not in Attendance: Jeff Goodwin

1. Comments from the Chair

Chair Larry Maslon asked Senior Vice President Lynne Brown to brief the Committee on the status of the architect selection process.

2. Architect Selection Update

Lynne Brown shared that there had been an unexpected development in the architect selection process—the design partner of one of the finalist firms decided to withdraw from consideration due to questions about its own capacity in light of schedule changes on other projects on which that firm is already working. The finalist firm, she noted, identified a new design partner for this project.

Following a short period of reassessment by the decision team, Brown indicated that both finalist firms would be invited back to present further information to the decision team. Members asked that all Committee members, in addition to Larry Maslon who had already been invited, be welcome to attend these additional sessions, to which Brown and Executive Vice President Alison Leary assented. Brown and Leary conveyed that the goal of these additional planned sessions is to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the efficacy of the new proposed partnership, as well as to assess the uniqueness and quality of design ideas/capabilities among the firms.

Some members questioned the ability to adequately judge a new partnership without having undertaken a similar level of review as had been conducted previously. Leary and Brown emphasized that, should the University wish to move forward with learning more about the new partnership, a full due diligence review would be conducted. This would include, Leary noted, the submission of a proposal, conducting reference checks and site visits, and further conversations with the partners. In addition, Senior Project Director
Kenny Lee agreed to send a preliminary assessment of the new design firm’s qualifications to the Committee for preliminary review. [This analysis was sent to the Committee following this meeting.]

3. Subcommittee - Construction/Mitigation

The Committee then divided into subcommittees.

Construction/Mitigation
The Construction/Mitigation Subcommittee conducted interviews with two candidate firms for the independent consultant role. While both firms presented compelling detail regarding previous experience and planned approach to this assignment, the Subcommittee decided that one firm was a better fit for this particular task. The Subcommittee will offer its recommendation to the full Committee for affirmation at its next meeting.

Stewardship
The Stewardship Subcommittee began to formulate a strategy for the future use of the various open spaces on the superblocks. Members were asked to identify a green space that had been successfully utilized and there was consensus that the Key Park fulfilled that criterion. The Subcommittee then discussed various spaces for children on the superblocks, including the utilization of Mercer playground. The need for an appropriate space for teenagers, in particular, was noted. The Subcommittee agreed that it would be appropriate to explore ways in which NYU and the Parks Department could share responsibility for the stewardship of that playspace and requested additional information about families with children in order to better understand and serve the needs of children.

With regard to issues surrounding dogs, the Committee indicated that attention should be paid to making sure that the new dog run (which will replace the current Mercer-Houston Dog Run as a result of the Coles Redevelopment) be an improvement over the current one. The Washington Square Park dog run was cited as a successful example. In addition, the plot allocated to the student Community Agriculture Club was discussed. While some members commented on the condition of the space, Leary noted that the Club is officially sanctioned and has active members. She suggested that her office further explore ways in which policies can be proactively implemented to ensure active engagement in maintaining spaces on the superblocks.

As the discussion progressed to other open spaces on the superblocks, the Subcommittee agreed that it would be useful to hear from individuals with expertise in property management and in various particular issue areas (i.e. urban planning, playground architecture, etc.) to provide a basis on which to make well-informed decisions. It was emphasized that, whatever the outcome or proposal from the Subcommittee’s discussions, that input from and consultation with the community would be crucial.