Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Monday, February 2, 2015

Members in Attendance: Barbara Albrecht (by phone), Lynne Brown, Renee Burillo, Sewin Chan, Jeff Goodwin, Michael Hengerer, Neal Herman, Kenny Lee, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Julia O’Connor, Michael Patullo, Rosemary Scanlon, Eero Simoncelli, Heather Skolnick

Members Not in Attendance: Rachel Belsky, Anne Hearn, Angela Kamer, Alison Leary

Invited Guests: Renee Burillo (NYU Office of Construction Management), Carl Krebs (Davis Brody & Bond), Richard Maimon (KieranTimberlake); Mayine Yu (Davis Brody & Bond)

1. Comments from the Chair

Chair Larry Maslon welcomed the Committee back after the semester break and noted the significant progress that has been made to date. He outlined plans for the Spring semester, including further developing policies to guide the use of open spaces on the superblocks; examining the ways in which various groups (e.g., faculty councils, tenants associations) can contribute their ideas about those policies; and communications from the SSAC to the NYU community.

Focusing particular attention on keeping the community apprised of the Committee’s work and to provide opportunities to participate in ongoing discussion, Maslon raised the idea of drafting and distributing a semi-annual report. This report, Maslon proposed, would provide a detailed record of the Committee’s work, and promote engagement with various stakeholders. The Committee agreed with this approach and it was noted that a draft report would be circulated in advance of the next meeting.

2. Independent Consultant Update

Barbara Albrecht, Chair of the Construction/Mitigation Subcommittee, updated the Committee on the progress that had been made by STV—the independent consultant selected by the Committee to review the mitigation measures outlined in the Restrictive Declaration. She noted that work with the Committee continued through January, including a meeting with several of the Subcommittee members.

Albrecht indicated that STV is working on a condensed version of a report that distills its findings and is understandable to non-experts. But the report will also contain, for those interested, more technical material that provides a detailed assessment of the Restrictive Declaration requirements as they compare to relevant national, state, and local code and best practices. It is anticipated that a draft report will be reviewed by the Subcommittee later this week, with review by the full Committee to follow prior to the next meeting.
3. Visioning Session with Architect

Larry Maslon introduced the members of the architectural team who were present at the meeting—Carl Krebs, Richard Maimon, and Mayine Yu—and provided a brief overview of the Committee’s work and membership. The architects introduced themselves and their respective firms, emphasizing their excitement at the opportunity to design the Coles building. They then provided a brief history of their respective firms, emphasizing their experience working with large public institutions on complex projects with multiple uses (e.g., performing arts, athletics, academic spaces, student residence halls, etc.).

Krebs noted that both firms will work collaboratively to design the building and that strategic partners and consultants will be engaged in certain technical areas, including performing arts (Fisher Dachs Associates) and athletics (Sasaki Associates).

Regarding the design process, it was noted that the programming phase—where architects meet with a series of committees of building end users—has already commenced, and that at least two meetings are planned with each of the programming groups. The architects will first gather information, followed by a reflective synthesis on their part, and then bring those results back to the programming groups for further discussion.

The architectural team then invited the Committee to participate in a visioning exercise, which asked members to respond to several questions designed to capture their input on the broad, overarching mission and role of the building. The Committee engaged in discussion, which focused on the following topics:

- Balance between public and private spaces, with particular focus on the areas that might be accessible to NYU ID card holders vs. the external community
- Designing a building that works on the human scale, and that respects the character of the surrounding neighborhood
- Connection with Washington Square, and other buildings on campus
- The overall density and complexity of building uses, especially those that require multiple stories
- Outdoor spaces that provided for multiple uses and levels of activity for different constituencies
- Strategies to keep the building active even in off-peak times of the day and year

There was consensus among the design team, in response to the Committee, that the client’s sense of clarity about the building’s goals and an overall willingness to learn as the design process unfolds are critical to the success of the eventual building. In addition, the architects recognized the extensive work that NYU has already undertaken—especially with the University Space Priorities Working Group report—in defining the building’s uses and priorities.

4. Discussion: Engagement with Architect

The Committee then discussed ways in which the architects could engage with the internal community in addition to the programming process that is already underway. The Committee felt that members of the NYU community should be given the chance to meet the architects in an informational setting that encourages engagement and takes place prior to the development and/or introduction of a design.
Several ideas of such settings were discussed, including open forum meetings, videos, social media posts, etc. The Committee felt that allowing, indeed encouraging, dialogue with the architectural team, would be important to the process. It was noted that the architects also plan to hold “visioning” sessions with several key University groups, including faculty and students.

It was agreed that a more robust engagement plan be developed and presented at the Committee’s next meeting.