Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting Summary

Meeting date: Thursday July 16, 2015 10:00 – 11:30

Meeting Location: President’s Conference Room, Bobst Library, 12th Floor

Members in attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Rachel Belsky, Lynne Brown, Jeff Goodwin, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Alison Leary, Larry Maslon, Michael Patullo, Eero Simoncelli, Heather Skolnick, Sewin Chan

Skype: Allen Mincer

Guests: Kenny Lee, Bob Berne, Members of the Coles Architectural Team: Richard Maimon (KieranTimberlake), Carl Krebs (Davis Brody & Bond), Mayine Yu (Davis Brody & Bond)

Members not in attendance: Neal Herman, Angela Kamer

1. Comments from the Chair

Larry Malson, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed Ezra Sacks who is joining the Committee as the representative from the full-time, non-tenure track/contract Faculty. Malson also said goodbye to Sewin Chan who is stepping down from the committee. Arvind Rajagopal will be taking her spot as representative for the Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty beginning in September.

There was a special thank you and fond goodbye to Michael Patullo who is leaving the Committee and New York University to take another position outside the University. Maslon presented Patullo with a parting gift.

2. Legal Update

Lynne Brown, Senior Vice President for University Relations and Public Affairs reported on the decision of the New York State Court of Appeals. The decision was favorable to New York City – clearing the way for NYU to move forward with the redevelopment of the Coles site.

3. Coles Redevelopment Update

The architectural team was re-introduced and invited to report on the programing phase of the project, which is nearing completion.

There have been numerous meetings and discussions with the various end users of the building as outlined by the USPWG. In those meetings actual space needs, desires, and priorities have been discussed and reviewed and revised. Several usage areas, such as theater space, lend to
compromises to maximize the utility of each square foot. The architects highlighted two main areas that have placed pressure on space allocation. The University Space Priorities Working Group’s (“USPWG”) square footage recommendations did not consider the volume of different spaces or include Community Space, Dining/Cafeteria facilities, and Building Support.

The presentation provided updates on the various building uses: community space, dining facilities, building support, student activity and study space, student and faculty housing, athletics, performing arts spaces, and classrooms.

The specifications of the Community Facility Space were set by the ULURP. This space will be 7,500 square feet and will be located in the building’s street level atrium. There was discussion about having tables, chairs and perhaps a café in this space. It was also decided that this space should be accessible to all and security would be located beyond this point in the building.

The USPWG did not provide specifications for dining facilities in the building. The architects said dining can fall into three categories: marketplace dining, which is associated with traditional dining halls, a convenience store or a coffee bar. It was noted that a traditional dining space would require more square footage than the other options.

Building support spaces are impacted by required adjacencies; such as trash and recycling spaces in student and faculty housing, mail distribution spaces, lockers for athletics and loading docks.

The discussion about student activity and study spaces ranged from collaborative meeting rooms to individual study spaces and quiet areas. The Committee expressed an interest in the commuter lounge and resource center. The architects talked about the possibility of having classroom spaces transform into student activity and club spaces in the evening after class.

The architects moved onto student housing and reiterated that the USPWG recommended the housing be for freshman. They noted the need for a lobby or entrance that has a security barrier and established that the rooms would be designed in a variety sizes based on the needs cited by student affairs and student residential life.

The number of faculty housing units recommended by the USPWG was 100. After meeting with faculty housing it was determined that there is more academic need than faculty housing need. The architects are therefore allocating space for 60-70 two and three bedroom units. The lower portion of the faculty housing platform, which will face student housing may be used for other, low-traffic, academic uses such as individual practice rooms.

Moving on to athletics and recreation, the planned spaces include activity and fitness spaces; a multi-court gym; a pool; strength and conditioning space; varsity and recreational lockers, sports medicine spaces; and office, meeting, and support spaces. The architects considered the possibility of maintaining 404 Lafayette Street as a permanent space for fitness, as a means for reducing the required square footage in the new athletic center. The architects discussed the possibility of retaining the diving well at Palladium and not having a diving well in the new
athletic space, as well as the challenge of replacing the outdoor tennis courts and track. The architects also noted that it was likely that the pool would be six lanes as oppose to the eight recommended by the USPWG.

The presentation concluded with the performing arts spaces and the challenge of having the future end users think about priorities and what they need to have in the new building. The option to revisit Skirball Center for the Performing Arts and complete the installation of an electronic sound system, which would enhance the acoustic quality of the theater, was discussed as a way to save square footage by identifying an existing space on campus that can fill an academic need.

The architects concluded by explaining that they are creating a programming report, which includes the needs, likes, and wants of the future end users, that will inform the next phase of the planning process, which is schematic design. The architects explained that schematic design doesn’t result in a building rendering, but developmental concepts like floor plans, adjacencies, circulation strategies, and how all the pieces can fit into the building. A rendering will be the product of the design development phase, which follows schematic design.

4. Final Items Discussed

Brown announced that the landmark variance for the Urban Farm in Silver Towers will not be renewed. The people who are tending gardens will have access on the weekends through fall through the end of the harvest. Brown noted that the option for locating another urban farm somewhere on the superblocks can be part of the Open Space discussion for this committee.

Kenny Lee of the Coles Project Team announced that the Mercer-Houston dog run design and permits are in place to begin construction in August. The project is currently on schedule to be complete in early January 2016.

Preliminary sub-terrain site preparation work for the redevelopment of the Coles site is scheduled for early August. This work is scheduled to take place on the Coles plaza on Mercer Street during the time when Coles is closed for regularly scheduled annual maintenance.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding communications and sending an update to the community on what to expect in the short and long term for the redevelopment project. Malson suggested a communication containing general details rather than specific timelines. It was noted that the sub-terrain work will be a visible and audible sign that work is progressing and a communication describing this work will help dispel community speculation.