Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Members in attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Heather Banoub, Rachel Belsky, Lynne Brown, Jeff Goodwin, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Angela Kamer, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Arvind Rajagopal, Ezra Sacks, Rosemary Scanlon, Erica Silverman, Eero Simoncelli

Members Not in Attendance: Neal Herman

Invited Guests: Linda Chiarelli, Vice President, Capital Projects and Facilities
Randy Stephan, Vice President, Global Campus Safety
Jimmy Pisaniello, Assistant Vice President, Campus Safety
Kenny Lee, Senior Director, Construction Management

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Larry Maslon, welcomed Committee members to the first Committee meeting of the spring semester. Maslon gave an overview of what members can expect in upcoming meetings. Users of the urban garden spaces around the superblocks have been invited to attend the next scheduled SSAC meeting on February 16th to discuss issues and ideas for gardening and farming on the blocks. Members from the University Leadership will attend the following meeting on March 1st to discuss the SSAC’s quality of life recommendations submitted in December 2015.

2. Update on Changes in the Administration

Maslon turned to Lynne Brown, Senior Vice President of University Relations and Public Affairs, to introduce the meeting’s guests. Brown welcomed Linda Chiarelli, Vice President of Capital Projects and Facilities, who is taking on the portion of Alison Leary’s portfolio that involves construction and facilities management. Brown noted that Chiarelli comes to NYU from Forest City Ratner, where she led the Barclays Center project and would be taking the lead on the 181 Mercer Street development project.

Brown introduced Randy Stephan, Vice President for Global Campus Safety and Jimmy Pisaniello, Assistant Vice President for Campus Safety. Both Stephan and Pisaniello have been helping to sift through the Committee’s report, specifically as it seeks strategies for implementation on enforcement and safety.

Brown announced that President Hamilton was expected to stop by the meeting and that he read the Committee’s Quality of Life report and was looking forward to meeting the group.

3. Update on Closing Coles and Opening of 404 Lafayette
Brown announced that Coles was scheduled to stay open through February 21st and that the new fitness facility at 404 Lafayette Street was scheduled to open on February 22nd.

Kenny Lee, Senior Director, shared photos of the 404 Lafayette Street facility and said that the Athletics Department was happy with the space. Lee noted that all the equipment is new, the space is air conditioned, and houses more cardio equipment that Coles currently offers. Brown added that the major complaints coming into the University regarding Coles closure are concerns over losing access to a pool (which to some users is not compensated for by the additional hours of free swim being offered at Palladium and/or the subsidies being offered to NYU faculty, administrators, and staff to local swimming pools) and the lack of interim replacements for court sports.

A Committee member recommended adding an additional bus stop to the NYU-E-Route that would be convenient for residents headed to Palladium from the superblocks. Another member asked if the school buses that currently pick up students at the corner of Mercer Street and Bleecker Street near Coles would be relocated. Heather Banoub, Assistant Director of Communications, said the Office of Government and Community Affairs was working with the NYC Department of Education to relocate the school bus stops. She said she would be in touch with NYU’s bus shuttle operators to inquire about an added stop on the E-Route.

4. Update on 181 Mercer

Brown announced the selection of the independent monitor (as mandated by the ULURP) for the 181 Mercer Street project. The firm HDR was approved by the City Planning Commission and has performed monitoring duties at other NYC development projects including for Columbia’s Manhattanville campus, and the private residential development “Greenwich Lane,” also in Greenwich Village. The Committee was reminded that NYU is obligated to pay for HDR’s services, but the firm reports directly to City Planning. It was noted that independent monitors are not unusual for large projects like 181 Mercer. Maslon asked if STV, the firm that reviewed the Restrictive Declaration for the Committee, would have any interaction with HDR. Brown explained that City Planning would look solely to HDR to ensure NYU complies with mitigation rules set forth in the Restrictive Declaration. Brown did say that NYU would share STV’s report with HDR and would put the firms in contact with one another if HDR had questions about the report.

The update on progress at 181 Mercer included the start of investigatory borings, interior abatement, and the removal of all equipment and furniture from the building. Brown noted that NYU’s asset management department would be working with local nonprofits and schools to see if they can use equipment not being relocated to 404 Lafayette. Banoub said she would be sending out a project update next week.

Brown announced that the public relations team would preparing an overall communication about 181 Mercer and that the Committee could expect the architects to return before the end of the semester to present interior programming decisions and concepts for the exterior design.

5. Update on Superblock Developments
Brown reviewed some highlights from the last Superblock Progress Report: the Silver Towers window project is complete; the 1 and 2 Washington Square Village roof replacement project is scheduled to begin in early spring; work is progressing on the Bleecker Street and LaGuardia Place public open spaces; and, the new dog run is scheduled to open in early March.

There was a discussion about improving communications and signage around the open space projects on Bleecker Street and LaGuardia Place. The issues of dogs in the Oak Grove and homeless individuals lingering in the Silver Towers seating area were also discussed. Stephan and Pisaniello spoke to the issue of homelessness around the University and asked the Committee to report incidents to the Public Safety call center at 212-998-2222.

Stephan and Pisaniello also reviewed for the Committee the “rounds” that Public Safety conducts throughout the day in and around the superblocks.

Brown also distributed a demographic data handout that included information on the residential profile on the superblocks as requested by the Committee during their subcommittee sessions.

President Hamilton arrived and thanked the Committee for the year and a half of work they had already invested in the “stewardship” effort. He said that he read both the Space Priorities Working Group report and the Committee’s Quality of Life report and he reflected on the unique sense of community generated by NYU as an institution where faculty live within walking distance of the center of the university. He noted how rare that is among American institutions of higher education and how it was a feature to be valued and enhanced. President Hamilton said the Committee’s report is important as we look to address the “quality of life” challenges faced by the University and to ensure that university facilities keep up with the needs of students and faculty and help us advance academic priorities. President Hamilton said he understood that the Mercer Street Project was contentious, but also sees its importance given his observation of how “space-starved” NYU is (in terms of academic square feet per students – among the lowest of our peers).

Brown concluded the meeting, thanking President Hamilton, and reminding the Committee that a group from University leadership will return to the Committee on March 1st for a discussion about the recommendations in the Committee’s report.