

Open Space Oversight Organization

December 15, 2013

Recommendations from the Open Space Oversight Organization (OSOO) for Landscape/Hardscape Improvements for: Bleecker Street Strip, LaGuardia Park, Mercer Playground

General Notes:

- ◆ All three of these spaces are city-owned lands. The OSOO understands that they are or will be remapped from the NYC Department of Transportation to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. Any improvements NYU may undertake do not have any bearing on NYU's ability, or lack thereof, to use these strips for their own purposes.
- ◆ In all cases, every effort must be made to preserve and protect mature trees on and adjacent to these spaces.
- ◆ Community input, including discussions with the community groups – Friends of LaGuardia and LMNO(P) – that developed and currently oversee these spaces, should be an integral part of the process.
- ◆ Ongoing maintenance of the completed spaces is a high priority going forward.

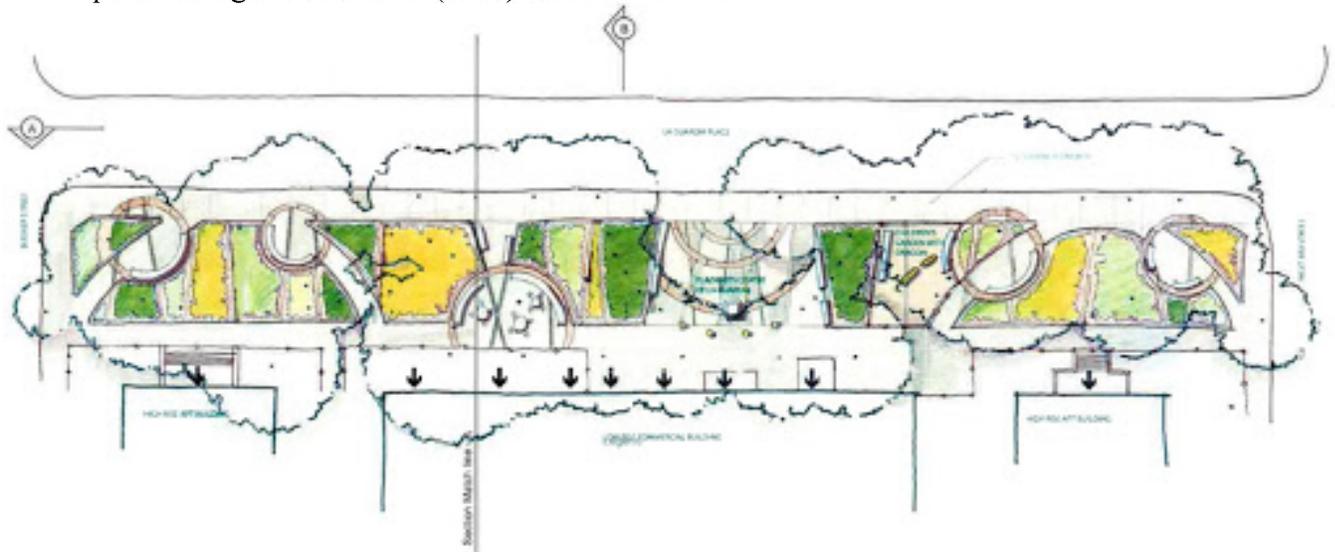
Bleecker Street Strip:

- Desire to keep all of the mature trees.
- Replace the chain link fence but keep planted areas within some type of fencing that can be seen through but not stepped over.
- New lighting to make the space feel safe and inviting, but with protection to prevent light pollution to nearby residents.
- Better maintenance of plantings around the trees with a possible sprinkler system.
- Have no or limited seating to discourage sleeping and inappropriate uses including by people coming from Bleecker Street bars. Design any seating to discourage sleeping.
 - If seating is included, more of it should be oriented towards Oak Grove and Picasso statue than towards traffic on Bleecker Street.
- Consider the possibility of shifting the strip south to take over the sidewalk between the Oak Grove and the existing strip, and widening the Bleecker Street south sidewalk in that area.

LaGuardia Park:

- No alteration to the new Adrienne's Garden toddler park, featuring a dragon slide/climbing structure and separate seating area, as it is welcome and useful. DPR needs to consistently open and close the toddler park at appropriate times.

- Mostly the portion south of Fiorello LaGuardia statue under discussion, though the current configuration is not a problem to neighbors as it encourages quiet use.
- Implement the general Master Plan design previously approved by community and the public design commission (PDC) in 2009.



- Keeping all of the mature trees as well as the verdant, contemplative nature of this park are priorities. Removing ivy and replacing with different understory plants may reduce rodents.
- Paths should be level and smooth so seniors are safe and welcome. Explore possible mediation areas for senior population.
- Consider having a "discovery" area woven into the flora, with boulders and woodland paths to encourage exploration (safe surface around boulders if for climbing), and/or a history/educational element with replaceable informational signage appropriate to the area along a path.
- Be careful that any new seating does not support inappropriate uses such as sleeping or congregation after drinking in the adjacent bar-heavy Bleecker Street. Explore lighting that increases safety but does not interfere with residential windows or ecology.

Mercer Playground

- Maintain the design priority of being for older children (approx 5-14) as they age out of the nearby Key Park & Adrienne's Garden which are for younger kids, as are DeSalvio, Vesuvio, Minetta, etc.

- Investigate options for a soft/safety/turf or turf-like interior field for active, unstructured play in center.
- Surround the interior field with a harder surface perimeter track for learning to ride a bicycle, scooters, roller skates, running/cycling/skating laps, etc. Possible scooter ramp?
- Possible permanent equipment like goals, as well as field markings and bases.
- Consider concentrating play areas on one end to maximize unprogrammed space and allow younger kids to play in a somewhat separate area – possibly real grass.
- Add more plantings in curved sections for interest, nature and healthy environment
- No benches on west wall to prevent climbing over wall and sleeping farther from street, possible active play options on wall – climbing wall, painted goals/strike zone, bright colors, etc.
- Consider locations of openings to the space, and adding signage to invite users. Examine the appropriate number of entrances for children’s safety. Explore whether another entrance is appropriate on mercer and whether the existing exists should be closed for safety. Gates should have either self-close or double gates for safety. Note: the existing perimeter fence was designed by community and built with public funds. The current design, spacing and height were determined to be desirable for safety of the children within.
- Change usual Parks signage to no longer prohibit the uses the park is ideal for (bicycle, roller skating, scooters, etc).
- Consider relationship to Key Park - families with children using both spaces, and the effect of expanded Creative Steps using the key park as well.
- Keep a water feature - add controls to save water and consider soft surface and eliminating the spiral which kids may trip over when running into/out of the water.
- Improve lighting but avoid light pollution into the residences across Mercer Street and in Washington Square Village.
- Consistent, ongoing maintenance is a priority.