Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 12, 2016, 2:00-3:30PM

Meeting Location: Kimmel Center, Room 905

Members in attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Jeff Goodwin, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Angela Kamer, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Arvind Rajagopal, Erica Silverman, Eero Simoncelli

Members Not in Attendance: Neal Herman, Ezra Sacks

Representatives: Lynne Brown, Administrative Liaison (ex-officio),
Heather Banoub, Assistant Director Communications, Community Affairs (ex-officio)
Rachel Belsky, Project Director, University Relations and Public Affairs (ex-officio)

Invited Guests:
John Beckman, Vice President for Public Affairs, University Relations and Public Affairs
Arlene Peralta, Senior Director, Community Engagement, University Relations and Public Affairs

1. Welcome and Comments from the Chair
Chair Larry Mason welcomed the committee and called the meeting to order.

2. Communications Strategy for Superblock Improvements
As a follow up to the March 22, 2016 meeting, Maslon opened for discussion the subject of “branding” as a way to encapsulate the superblock initiatives now underway or planned. For consideration is the degree to which the university might want to take credit for these initiatives, setting the right tone in any messaging, and determining the audience – superblock residents or a broader constituency.

Brown introduced John Beckman and explained that he had been tasked to propose communications strategies for superblock accomplishments. As a starting point and as a comparable, Beckman referenced the NYC Transit Authority’s capital campaign shown electronically on subway kiosks with the message “What We Accomplished” that included a very short description and photo. Beckman said he had observed a number of these kiosks and that the message was modest, factual, and with a consistent identity. Beckman suggested that something similar could be established within the superblock buildings, and that there be a companion posting on the SSAC web page.

Simoncelli suggested that a rendering should be part of the message before the project starts, with photos of the completed project in the final message, to show a “before and after” for the project. This imagery would get people excited about the project and would generally be more engaging. He also asked how these messages might blend with Heather’s communications; Simoncelli suggested that they be both stand alone and blended.
Kamer noted that these types of “What We’ve Accomplished” messages would also help visitors know what NYU is doing to care for its properties, and would instill “superblock pride”.

It was further noted that there are two rusted flagpoles in the plaza and a question was raised whether they were used; a suggestion was made to hang vertical banners on them, to further the further the “superblock pride” notion. A further question was raised regarding Battery Park City, and their communications model when they began programming their space.

Erica Silverman suggested establishing a twitter account and/or social media page so that there was an immediate and available platform to communicate. Maslon noted that having these platforms would be very helpful when open houses commence for the 181 Mercer St project.

Maslon said that the idea for branding accomplishments goes back to the window project which was implemented well and at great expense, and could have accrued a reservoir of goodwill among superblock residents. Simoncelli said the windows project did establish good will as he has heard from tenants that they are grateful and happy for the new windows. Brown said that the windows project was a good model for how the university can complete projects on time and within budget, an important message as the 181 Mercer Street project commences. Brown then tasked Beckman, Arlene Peralta, and Heather Banoub to come back to the group with an approach to communicate updates and accomplishments on the superblocks.

3. Urban Farm LPC Update
Belsky reported that she had met with Steinhardt Professors Amy Bentley and Jennifer Berg, along with the landscape architects to discuss the urban farm design requirements, and that a concept design would be developed and circulated to the garden constituent groups (UPNS, STTA, ST gardeners, and Professors Bentley and Berg) for feedback prior to the next SSAC meeting (April 26, 2016).

Regarding changes to the diagonal walkway at Silver Towers by adding hedges, fencing, and by widening it, Belsky reported that the landscape architects had advised that Landmarks would very likely not approve the diagonal walk as a permanent landscape feature at Silver Towers. Realizing the desire for a short cut path to Silver Towers II, the landscape architects suggested instead that a walkway be created along the north side of ST II. A concept for this new walkway was circulated to meeting attendees.

SSAC members discussed the merits of the new walk while touching on related topics such as the increased foot traffic around the Oak Grove when Greene Street Walk is open, how the Oak Grove should be used generally (possibly partitioning some parts and opening up some parts), and the impact of the construction fence in this area.

Speaking generally about the open spaces, Maslon stated that he thought there was consensus for how the plaza and Oak Grove should be used, but not for the areas in back of the LaGuardia Place retail. Maslon suggested that determining a use for this area might be connected Mark Gordon’s superblock improvement work.

4. Faculty Housing Job Description
Larry Maslon asked committee members to review the description for the new position in faculty housing and email comments; the description was put together by Katy Fleming and Lynne Brown. Maslon urged everyone to provide input.

5. **Superblock Walk Through Update**

Brown reported that as a result of a recent walk through of the superblocks, modest interventions will be made. These include: removing the non-functioning public safety call boxes, installing a new fence around the Key Park, and new plantings along the WSV driveways. Maslon noted that a walkway near WSV 3, which once had lighting, now has empty wiring conduit or hoses, and exhaust hoods that create a dangerous pedestrian condition; also that that the number “3” for 3 WSV is hard to read, and looks like an “8.” Brown reminded the group that Mark’s work includes looking at signage.

6. **181 Mercer Street Update**

Brown reported that interior removals were ongoing at Coles gym and that NYU’s Office of Civic Engagement had coordinated the donation of a significant portion of the materials to local non-profits and community groups. Brown also reported that interior abatement was underway.

Brown reminded the group that at the May 10th meeting, the architects would be back to update the group on the 181 Mercer Street project.

As a wrap up, Brown also noted that Mark Gordon would be at the April 26th meeting to present an update on the superblock improvement initiatives.