Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 26, 2016, 2:00-3:30PM

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

Members in attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Jeff Goodwin, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Angela Kamer, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Ezra Sacks, Eero Simoncelli

Members Not in Attendance: Neal Herman, Arvind Rajagopal, Erica Silverman

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

Invited Guests:
- John Beckman, Vice President for Public Affairs
- Mark Gordon, Director for Design, Construction Management

1. Welcome and Comments from the Chair
Chair Larry Maslon welcomed the Committee and called the meeting to order. Maslon reminded the Committee that the next and final meeting for the spring semester would be held on Tuesday, May 10, and the 181 Mercer Street architects would present on progress for the design phase of the project. Lynne Brown let the Committee know that the architects were still in the midst of the design phase, seeking peer feedback on design ideas and developing their vision for the building and how it works with the programming elements that will be housed within. Brown reported that the architects’ design would also be shaped by programming adjacencies, needed space for, mechanicals, budgetary considerations, and site conditions, such as the location of bedrock. Maslon recommended the University send an end of the semester communication about the project so residents know what to expect. Brown said her team is developing a plan around how the building designs will be rolled out in the fall and ensuring neighbors know what to expect in advance of the start of the construction phase of the project. A Committee member asked when the presentation space would be ready. Rachel Belsky said the space was expected to be ready in the fall.

2. Communications Update
Maslon welcomed John Beckman who provided an update on his recommendation for improving how the University keeps Washington Square Village and Silver Towers residents informed about the improvements around the superblocks, construction advisories, and events. Beckman went on a walkthrough of the superblocks, including the building lobbies, and recommended photo screens be installed near the elevator banks. These screens would include digital images of the aforementioned updates relevant to each building.

A Committee member asked who would be responsible for curating and updating the information presented on the screens and keeping it relevant. Brown said the new Office of Faculty Housing position
would be responsible for collecting the information and keeping the screens updated. Brown also said this new position would work to understand the types of information residents are looking to be kept informed of. Committee members asked about whether the screens could be hooked up to WiFi, making content management more convenient, or if battery operated screens would be preferred, as they can be used to communicate information even in emergency situations. Maslon asked if the SSAC could see and provide feedback on design templates for the communications. Brown affirmed. Beckman agreed to research screen options and develop a proposal for procurement and installation.

3. **Superblock Open Space Update**

Maslon re-introduced Mark Gordon to provide an update on the open space enhancements recommended by the Committee.

- **Signage:** A signage program modeled on the signage currently at Silver Towers will be designed for the Washington Square Village area. Content and locations will be developed and will be provided to the Committee for comments.
  - This review will include discussions about policies for areas without clear jurisdiction (i.e. dog friendly or location available for residents to reserve for birthday parties).
  - Gordon recommended the signage be rolled out in phases, beginning with those that do not require policy discussion, and followed by the others.

- **Fence Removal and Plantings:** Gordon reported at least 50% of the fences around the perimeter of Washington Square Village have already been removed. Additional fence removal and improvement of adjacent plantings will follow in the coming months.
  - A Committee member said there have been complaints about an increase of dogs entering the plantings areas since the fences were removed. Some Committee members recommended the installation of a low barrier to keep the dogs out, while others thought this wasn’t really an issue. Gordon offered to speak with George Reis, NYU’s Landscape Manager, to see if he can provide metric on whether or not plants have been negatively affected by dogs since the fences were removed.
  - Belsky noted that during a walk-through of the area with some NYC Parks’ Department representatives, the group commented on how nice the areas look without the fences.

- **Fence Removal and Replacement at Key Park:** A fence design is being developed to replace the chain link fence currently enclosing the Key Park. Fence replacement would be paired with the installation of new perimeter plantings.

- **Sasaki Garden Steps:** Repairs will be undertaken in the coming months to address chipped concrete, pending SSAC direction on the removal of the garden gates and budget approval.
  - A discussion was held about whether or not the gates should be removed. Most Committee members recommended removing the gates, but some remained concerned about the security impact of removing the gates.
  - To help the Committee make a final decision, Brown will ask Jimmy Pisaniello, Assistant Vice President, Campus Safety, and Erin Lynch, Director of the Office of Faculty Housing and Residential Services, to provide reports on the number and types of incidents reported in and around the Sasaki Garden.
  - Committee members recommended better lighting and more public safety patrols in the garden in the evening if the gates are removed.

- **LaGuardia Retail Area:** Debris and equipment storage have been removed from the north and south entrances. Next steps include improving the plantings beds with ground cover. Lighting will be improved around the LaGuardia Retail strip. Design research is also underway for the most effective, attractive, and maintainable screening fence for behind the retail strip.

- **Infill Plantings along WSV Driveways:** The asphalt patches will be removed, damaged curbs and drains repaired, and grasses/hardy plants planted, along the WSV driveways.
Gordon reported on general clean up happening around the superblocks, including painting of the exterior ground floor columns on WSV and removal of non-functioning emergency call boxes.

4. Urban Farm LPC Design
Belsky reported that the new urban farm design, which was created in conjunction with the Steinhardt food studies faculty, was circulated to the various users of the space for comment. One user recommended maintaining a high fence and Belsky noted that the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) may request lowering the fence. Belsky also noted that the design includes terracing the planting beds and since it changes the topography of the site, the LPC may not like the idea. With the urban farm design the LPC application will be finalized. Belsky expects it will be submitted this summer.

5. Diagonal Walkway Design
Belsky showed the Committee a design to replace the existing diagonal walkway (that connects the Silver Towers plaza to Bleecker Street) with a path that would run along the north side of 100 Bleecker Street (Silver Towers II) and into the new Green Street Walk. This new path would come online once the 181 Mercer Street building is complete. This conceptual design will be submitted to the LPC as part of the same application as the urban farm and the design details would be finalized concurrently with the Green Street Walk design process. A Committee member asked if a barrier could be installed to help keep dogs out of the Oak Grove during the construction. Belsky will work with Turner to review options to this end.

6. Faculty Housing Job Description Feedback
Heather Banoub will circulate the draft job description for final comments.