Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Thursday, October 13, 2016, 12:00pm – 1:30pm

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

Members in attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Juan Bello, Anne Hearn, Neal Herman, Larry Maslon, Joseph Onwughalu, Ezra Sacks, Erica Silverman, Eero Simoncelli

Members Not in Attendance: Angela Kamer, Allen Mincer, Robert Shapley

Representatives: Lynne Brown, Senior VP, University Relations & Public Affairs (ex-officio)
Arlene Peralta, Senior Director, Community Engagement (ex-officio)
Rachel Belsky, Project Director, University Relations (ex-officio)
Heather Banoub, Assistant Director of Communications, Community Engagement (ex-officio)

Invited Guests: Linda Chiarelli, Vice President, Capital Projects and Facilities
Joe Juliano, Vice Provost for Strategic Planning
Erin Lynch, Assistant Vice President, Faculty Housing
Renee Burillo, Project Manager, Construction Management

1. Welcome and Comments from the Chair
Chair Larry Maslon welcomed the Committee and invited guests and called the meeting to order. Maslon welcomed Juan Bello to the Committee. Bello is joining the Committee for the academic year while Committee member Arvind Rajagopal is on sabbatical. Bello introduced himself as faculty in Steinhardt’s music program. He currently lives in 3 Washington Square Village and has previously lived in 2 Washington Square Village.

2. 181 Mercer Street Programming and Design Update
Maslon welcomed Chiarelli and Juliano and thanked them for attending the meeting and giving the Committee an update on the programming of the building. Chiarelli began by reminding the Committee that during the last update in July, the team shared that engineering and cost estimate studies revealed that due to site conditions the below-grade construction (specifically 3 or more levels below-grade) would be very costly and complicated. Since then the architects have been working on designs that scale back the below-grade space while minimizing programming cuts. The architects worked with student housing, the provosts’ office, the deans of Steinhardt and Tisch, and the Athletics Department to prioritize the spaces that would benefit their curricula most and the outcomes of those conversations comprise the programming update. Chiarelli noted that the reduction in building size has resulted in a better building layout than in previous design iterations.

Juliano shared that Steinhardt and Tisch prioritized the need for smaller studio spaces, individual practice rooms, and spaces to accommodate private instruction in instrumental performance. He noted
that piano, jazz, and vocal instruction will remain in their current buildings and 181 Mercer will be a cohesive space for Steinhardt’s instrumental music program. Both schools currently lease outside studio spaces, which is expensive. Both schools also collaborated on the size of the Proscenium Theater, which will be approximately 350-seats and will be able to accommodate everything except symphonic productions, which would require a larger space. Juliano explained that the Skirball Theater in Kimmel is the appropriate size for symphonic productions and after evaluating the space it was decided to install a LARES electronic sound enhancement system that will allow the space to be used for the types of productions that will not be possible in the 181 Mercer Street Proscenium Theater. Sacks asked if the Proscenium Theater would have projection capabilities, which Chiarelli confirmed. Maslon shared that Tisch was pleased with the size of the Proscenium Theater.

Juliano let the Committee know that following the University Space Priorities Working Group (USPWG) final report release, the Provost’s office performed a study of the University’s instructional and classroom spaces with the same consultant engaged by the USPWG to study how the University uses classrooms. The study found that large lecture rooms are only used for large-class teaching 50% of the time and the remainder of the time, smaller classes are scheduled to use these large spaces. Thus the goal was to fill the gap and better match inventory with smaller classroom sizes that are in high demand. 181 Mercer Street will accomplish this with approximately 50-56 classrooms with flexible furniture. Chiarelli noted that the building was still in schematic design and this number can change as the architecture team iron out final programming details and “back room” (i.e. mechanical room) space requirements. Juliano noted that this will be the largest number of classrooms to come online at once in the University’s history. He shared that many existing classroom spaces are often constrained by columns, limiting the flexibility to change these spaces as instructional needs change over time. For example, most existing classrooms are situated up against the windows of the building. In 181 Mercer Street the corridors are expected to be on the exterior of the building, along the windows, with the classrooms located inboard, making the rooms easier to resize in the future via easier wall removal. Chiarelli noted that in making the final decisions about apportioning space, the team tried to hew to the proportions of uses among academic/athletic/residential space as outlined by the USPWG. Once the building’s program was finalized they would compare the USPWG recommendations to the final program. The Committee was reminded that the USPWG did not include space for mechanical rooms and other required back of house spaces needed to run the building, so including these spaces had an impact on the allocation of square footage as well.

Chiarelli described the community spaces that would be in the building, a large lobby accessed via Bleecker Street and a community room that will open out to the Greene Street Walk, as required by the Restrictive Declaration. Simoncelli asked if the size of the atrium was reduced. Chiarelli said the atrium was reduced about 20% in size from the last presentation. She said she thought it was more appropriately sized now and would still be two stories high and have a grade staircase. A café will be located on the second floor and a dining facility will open to usable green roof space. The Athletics’ program will include a four-court gym that can seat 2700 person gatherings. This court space is the same size as Coles, but will be able to fit more people with improved stairwells that per the Building Code will allow for a larger maximum capacity (the Coles courts could seat 1900 person gatherings). The fitness center at 404 Lafayette Street will continue being used for cardio and weight training. The architects were able to accommodate an indoor running track, but were not able to relocate the tennis courts from Coles. A six lane lap pool is included in the programming, an increase from the 4 or 5 lanes at Coles. Diving and the swim team will remain at Palladium, though they may use the 181 Mercer Street pool for practices as well. There will be one wrestling room and two regulation size squash courts, half the
number in Coles (but the Coles courts were not regulation size). There will be no racquetball courts in the 181 Mercer Street Athletic program.

The student residential portion of the program is still expected to be in residential college formatting, similar to Goddard Hall, where the dorm is united by a shared interest (i.e. a field of study). The number of residential colleges within the building is still being studied and will be based on the optimal size for these communities to be successfully formed. Right now there will be approximately 415-425 beds, for predominately freshman students. Onwughalu asked about the types of rooms and if the University’s commitment to affordability will be carried over to the cost of living in this dorm. Chiarelli said there will be a combination of double, triple, and single rooms. The combination was studied by Residential Life to get the right combination and include more affordable rooms. Chiarelli shared that the dorms would not have kitchens (typical for freshman student housing) but each room will have a common area. A Committee member asked if there would be a laundry room in the building and Chiarelli confirmed. The number of apartments in the faculty housing portion of the program will range from 30 to 60 depending on the mixture of 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom apartments included in the plan. That mix and decisions about allocation of apartments are still under review. There will be a dedicated entrance to the faculty housing with a concierge and a mailroom. Faculty residents in this building will take an elevator to the sixth floor where faculty housing will begin. The sixth floor will have access to a “sky lobby” that opens to usable green roof space. Lynch agreed that the square footage and layouts were a comfortable fit. As a member of the USPWG, Albrecht let the Committee know that the Working Group gave faculty housing the lowest priority compared to supporting students and providing spaces for them close to the Square. Silverman asked about the study spaces in the building. Chiarelli said there will be both enclosed quite study spaces and open study spaces along the perimeter of the building and in other informal areas like stairwells. The library department worked with the architects to design effective study spaces and the department is happy with the spaces that fit into the building. Silverman recommended that there be specific graduate and undergraduate study spaces within the building, as graduate students would be happy to have a presence in the building.

Maslon posed the question of whether or not the University will benefit enough from this new building giving the programming that has been cut. Maslon asked the question in an effort to help the Committee think about recommendations for ways the University can roll-out the building’s programming in a way that shows the needs this building will fill. One recommendation was talking about instructional space, which can include theaters, studios, and practice rooms, with traditional classroom space. Juliano reminded Maslon and the other Committee members who were on the University Spaces Priorities Working Group (USPWG) that while the Working group recommended 80 classrooms in their final report, the goal was to reduce utilization rates by having classrooms that fit the schools’ needs (i.e. instructional spaces that fit the number of students in the class). Juliano also noted that the Working Group did not perform an in-depth study of curriculum and departmental needs. Following the classroom and instructional space study and the programming process with the architects and department deans, the Provost’s Office is happy with the instructional space in 181 Mercer Street as it will help the University meet its goal of reducing room utilization rates and is in the spirit of the USPWG’s recommendations. Maslon asked the Committee if they had any other concerns or questions, as part of their role is to answer questions their constituencies may have about the building and the program. Silverman shared a student concern about having a class in 181 Mercer Street and having another class 15-minutes later for example on 12th Street. Juliano said the classrooms in 181 Mercer would be focused on the undergraduate core curriculum and that the Provost’s Office and the Registrar are working to create zones where department classes are held in buildings that are not too far away from one another.
Sacks asked if the vibration from the subway was being taken into consideration. Chiarelli confirmed that the team was engineering the building to address vibration and noise created by the subway. Another Committee member asked if the University would identify and provide the NYU Community with a place for racquetball since it will be a lost amenity. Simoncelli recommended the University find ways to present the building as more than a vast number of programs put together in one building, but instead that there was intentionality in the design and there is synergy and benefit to having these programs together. Erica agreed that the building does this and the University should emphasize that 181 Mercer integrates different parts of the University together; bringing different students and faculty into same building that would not normally intermix. The focus should be on how this is a special building for students and faculty and how it enhances their NYU experience. Maslon recommended having quotes from the deans and athletics speaking their excitement about the new spaces. Bello said he found it easier to swallow that all programs had a nearly equal cut in programming (from the USPWG recommendations) and that there was a shared burden.

The Committee discussed the communication plans surrounding the building once the University goes public, and offered helpful suggestions on how best to present the building to internal and external audiences.

### 3. Updates on Mercer Street Construction

Banoub shared that exterior brick removal work is complete and exterior abatement work is expected to be complete by the end of the week. The asbestos container was relocated within the site after the last Committee meeting. Demolition within the Coles building and on the Coles plaza continues. The team is also bringing the plaza area to grade to prepare the space for a small crane that will be used during the structural demolition of the building to grade. Ongoing work is expected to continue through October and structural demolition of the building to grade is expected to follow in late October or early November. This work is expected to continue through February. Banoub reminded the Committee that weekly updates are generally sent on Mondays and the Committee could feel free to send along questions about the work taking place onsite at any time.

### 4. Open Space Enhancements Update

Brown let the Committee know that Belsky would take on a project management role to help move the open space enhancements forward with both Brown and Chiarelli’s teams. Belsky shared that the group would meet on Wednesdays to discuss the enhancement projects and that she would track the enhancements with a spreadsheet. Progress can be reviewed at Committee meetings. Burillo and Belsky shared that fence pricing is underway for the community lawn behind Bareburger, the student-run Community Agriculture Club plot, and the Key Park. Burillo gave an update on the lobby screens. She has been speaking with a representative from Mvix Digital Signage, a company that provides a cloud-based service and has experience working with other Universities. The Committee discussed recommendations for how the screens may be oriented in the lobbies. Maslon asked when the SSAC open space enhancement report would be sent to residents. Banoub confirmed the report would be distributed before the end of the week and the roll out would also include posters of the report in the lobbies and copies for residents to take from the lobbies. Maslon thanked the Committee for their attention and said the next meeting would focus on the progress of open space enhancements around the superblocks.