Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Tuesday September 12, 2017, 12:30pm – 2:00pm

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

Members in attendance: Barbara Albrecht, Clare Aronow, Michael Ferguson, Michael Garabedian, Anne Hearn, Angela Kamer, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Sena Pottackal, Robert Shapley

Members Not in Attendance: Mitchell Joachim, Andres Rabellino, Eero Simoncelli

NYU Representatives: Lynne Brown, Senior VP, University Relations & Public Affairs (ex-officio)
Erin Lynch, Assistant VP, Faculty Housing
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)
Erin Donnelly, Community Liaison, Faculty Housing (ex-officio)

Invited Guests: Juan Calero, NYU Student Senators Council, Chair
Sophie Reid, Gensler
Kelly Combs, Gensler

1. Welcome and Comments from the Chair
Chair Larry Maslon welcomed the Committee and called the meeting to order. Maslon shared a book recommendation with the Committee (Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul,” by Jeremiah Moss) for its insight into how the city has changed over history. He noted that the book includes a few pages on NYU – not all positive! – and it is an overall interesting read.

2. Superblock Summer Enhancements, Rachel Belsky
Belsky highlighted the enhancements made around the superblocks over the summer months. The Committee was pleased with the University’s progress. They included the following:

- Completion of The Backyard space, with irrigation, a retail screen, and bluestone paver at the entry. A glass case has also been installed outside the south entry gate, which includes policies for using the space and upcoming events.
- Completion of the student agriculture club space redesign, which included the removal of wooden planting boxes. Shaped garden beds with cobblestone edging were installed.
- Construction of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) approved Urban Farm, south of Silver Towers I.
- Installation of new Sasaki Garden gates and removal of fences along West 3rd Street and installation of new plantings in West 3rd Street planting beds.
3. Ongoing and Upcoming Construction Projects on the Superblocks

Washington Square Village Elevator Replacement Project, Erin Lynch

Lynch reported that the elevator replacement project is underway in all four WSV buildings. Work commenced in June 2017, and is scheduled to continue through October 2018. The project includes the replacement of all mechanical equipment and the interior cabs. Lynch reports that the elevator cabs will have screens that will either mirror the Faculty Housing content shared in the lobbies, or will feature news and weather. Lynch added that Faculty Housing will explore different template options for these screens and would be open to input from the Committee on content and template design. Committee members who reside in WSV were pleased with the project thus far, noting the importance of the upgrade project for elevator reliability and efficiency.

Cogen Project, Heather Banoub

Banoub shared that the University is preparing to upgrade the capacity of the Co-Generation Power Plant to accommodate increased electricity and heating and cooling service for greater energy efficiency at 181 Mercer Street. This project will include demolition, abatement, installation of mechanical equipment behind Tisch hall within the bike rack area, and trenching within the Washington Square Village Garage, and across West 3rd and Bleecker Streets between Mercer Street and LaGuardia place in order to accommodate new piping and conduits. The project is scheduled to begin in late September 2017 and continue through winter 2019. Banoub is working with Faculty Housing to prepare a project announcement communication for Washington Square Village residents.

4. Faculty Housing Programming Update, Erin Donnelly

Donnelly presented on the programming events that took place in the Spring and Summer months and gave the Committee a preview of what Faculty Housing residents can expect to see over the Fall. Upcoming events include: back to school barbecue: harvest fest with pumpkins, cider, and a pet costume parade; a paper shredding event; daffodil bulb planting project; and tours of downtown artists’ studios.

5. 181 Mercer Street Update, Lynne Brown

Brown provided the Committee with an update on the architect’s progress on the 181 Mercer Street building design. Since the 181 Mercer Street architects presented to the Committee and rolled out the slimmer, less bulky building design in December 2016, the design team has continued refining the design as the building program solidified. During this process of design refinement, NYU has worked with the staff of the NYC Department of City Planning to ensure compliance with the approved Special Permit drawings. Most of the design refinements comply with the approved drawings, but there are three instances where the design refinements require a “minor modification” of the approved drawings. Brown shared that the University and 181 Mercer Street design team was scheduled to present these minor modifications before the Community Board 2 Land Use Committee.

Brown explained that it is not uncommon for the City Planning Commission to review the design for projects where the maximum envelope and design requirements are prescribed at the outset, as was the case for 181 Mercer Street during the 2012 Special Permit approvals (ULURP approvals). Brown shared the modifications with the Committee, highlighting that they enable a reduction in the visual mass of the building, which continues the design intention set by the architects and presented last December. The modifications also allow for greater articulation of the tower masses above the podium,
which is important to the building’s overall visual interest and corresponds to interior programming as well. Finally, the modifications facilitate more efficient floor plates and maximize functionality within the building. The Committee voted by affirmation in favor of supporting the modifications.

6. **Superblock Signage Design Update, Sophie Reid, Gensler**

Maslon welcomed the Gensler signage and wayfinding team back to the Committee. Reid presented on Gensler’s work over the summer following the working meeting to understand the Committee’s input on signage for Washington Square Village and Silver Towers at the May 2017 SSAC meeting. Gensler created two design options. The signage designs were driven by three major points taken from the Committee: that the signage make superblock residents “feel proud of their space,” while having an “NYU essence” that doesn’t feel too corporate, and that makes people feel welcome, but isn’t too public. Gensler reminded the Committee that since Silver Towers is a Landmarked property, installation of new signage on the southern block would require approval from the LPC. Belsky noted that a meeting to review the signage designs is scheduled with the LPC. The Committee discussed the possibility of incorporating braille into the signage plans and ensuring that the signage is both functional and aesthetically interesting. Lynch also recommended there be an approach for unveiling the selected design to the Tenants Associations and residents. Maslon recommended an Open House event with signage mock ups that residents can experience and provide feedback on. Maslon concluded the meeting asking Committee members to cast their design preference on the poster provided by Gensler and to send any additional feedback along via email in advance of the next meeting scheduled for October 24, 2017.