THE SUPERBLOCK STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

UPDATES: OPEN SPACE ENHANCEMENTS, EVENTS PROGRAMMING, AND A NEW SIGNAGE PROGRAM FOR THE SUPERBLOCKS

JANUARY 2018
Welcome to 2018; I hope each one of you is beginning the New Year full of expectation and promise—and keeping warm, too.

This semi-annual report from the Superblocks Stewardship Advisory Committee contains several important updates on our work over the last six months. Much of it is evident, I hope, as you go to work in the morning or take a walk around the blocks. There have been several significant improvements to our open spaces and events programming this year. These changes have served to improve and ameliorate our surroundings and have helped to not only to create new bonds within our community but to build on them and strengthen them. You’ll see some terrific work presented in this report, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the Office of Faculty Housing for their sustained work in these areas and to the University for supporting these efforts.

The most important addition to this report is the presentation of our ongoing efforts to create a viable system of Signage and Wayfinding. Those of you who have lived on the Superblocks for a while know our signage has been a haphazard, arbitrary affair with numerous entities putting signs out, without guidance, oversight, or advice. The task that the SSAC and the University embraced was to create a cogent and organic process from the ground up; that’s a challenge, surely.

“Everybody says ‘Don’t!’” runs an early song lyric by Stephen Sondheim. Signage often seems prohibitive or proscriptive, but actually it’s a way of maintaining consistency and citizenship among members of a community. The SSAC asked the University to examine this issue and engage a design firm, Gensler, to create something that can unite our Superblock community. Gensler has set a very high bar. Their signage plan comes to us via a thoroughly vetted process, after much consultation with tenants, residents and end-users as well as canvassing of the actual spaces. The intent of the signage is to provide clarity, so that all of us can function in concert, confident that residents (as well as Public Safety) are on the same page about the kind of behavior that respects the multi-varied residents of the Superblocks and allows us to co-exist with courtesy and consideration.

My mother was a big enthusiast for a buffet: “No one will like everything, but everyone will like something.” There is much to like in the Signage proposal and I look forward to seeing how it will invigorate our landscape once the much-anticipated spring rolls along.

- Laurence Maslon, Arts Professor, Tisch School of the Arts, Chair, Superblocks Stewardship Advisory Committee
The Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee (SSAC) was established in 2014 to advise University leadership on quality of-life issues on the Washington Square Village and Silver Towers blocks (collectively, the “superblocks”), before, during, and after construction of 181 Mercer Street, an academic building currently under construction on the Silver Towers block. The Committee is comprised of thirteen members, representing faculty, students, superblocks residents, and administrators.

The SSAC is guided by the belief that improvements to the blocks should be ongoing and facilitated by a transparent relationship between NYU and its community. With the SSAC’s input and guidance, a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program has been developed for the superblocks. Additionally, since the last SSAC report in December 2016, a number of open space enhancements were completed around the superblocks, which can be seen to the right.
A recommendation of the SSAC and generously supported by Provost Katherine E. Fleming, NYU Faculty Housing Happenings Events offers free programming to residents of the superblocks that celebrates the outdoor spaces, builds community among residents, and provides activities for all audiences.

In 2017, the Office of Faculty Housing organized a variety of community events including urban gardening workshops, site-specific dance, a barbecue, a fall festival, a Make Music New York concert, and a movie screening in The Backyard, which is Washington Square Village’s newest outdoor space. Faculty Housing Happenings also created the Draw, Design, Build Contest during which children designed their ideal playgrounds. LaGuardia Studio made 3D prints of the winners and all designs were displayed at Kimmel Galleries. NYU Faculty Housing Happenings Events are organized by Erin Donnelly, Community Liaison, and made possible through the leadership of Erin Lynch, Assistant Vice President, Faculty Housing.
SUPERBLOCK STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FACULTY HOUSING HAPPENINGS

EVENTS

Residents attended an urban gardening workshop. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Goldman

Mike Macc: New York concert. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Hollenshead

Residents attended an urban gardening workshop. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Goldman

Sasaki Garden Spring Awakening dance performance. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Kahn

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Residents attended an urban gardening workshop. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Goldman

Make Music New York concert. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Hollenshead

Families picked pumpkins at the Fall Family Fest. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Olivo
The signage program is an initiative of the SSAC, who identified it as a priority for the superblocks. Initiated in spring 2017, the program has taken shape with feedback from the tenant associations on both blocks and from residents at an Open House held on November 30th. With a coherent design and consistent messaging, the signage program seeks to memorialize and to provide an enforcement mechanism for open space and other policies established in 2016.

Two further program goals are to facilitate pedestrian and vehicular wayfinding and to provide publicity opportunities for superblock events and programs. The design uses icons to simplify the sign message and includes history and site information to instill “pride of place” for residents and visitors. Vendor selection, fabrication, and installation of the signage are expected by fall 2018. The signage for Silver Towers will require review and approval from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission because the site is a designated landmark.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Towers will require review and approval from residents and visitors. Vendor selection, events and programs. The design uses icons to provide publicity opportunities for superblock superblocks. Initiated in spring 2017, the SSAC, who identified it as a priority for the signage program is an initiative of the SSAC, who identified it as a priority for the superblocks. Initiated in spring 2017, the program has taken shape with feedback from the tenant associations on both blocks and from residents at an Open House held on November 30th. With a coherent design and consistent messaging, the signage program seeks to memorialize and to provide an enforcement mechanism for open space and other policies established in 2016.

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This report was created by the Superblock Stewardship Advisory Committee (SSAC).

This is the fourth report of the SSAC. Past reports can be found at nyu.edu/university-initiatives/ssac.