Sense of Community Helps New Director of Commercial Leasing Settle into Upper Manhattan

BY LAUREN MARSHALL

Carol Shuchman still counts her blessings that she was late to work on Sept. 11. As manager of retail for Columbia's Office of Institutional Real Estate, she watched as the second plane hit tower two, then evacuated the block with the river of people pouring out of both buildings.

Though there was no longer retail activity or a place of business in the weeks that followed, there was no shortage of work. Shuchman spent two months assisting tenants of smaller businesses in the World Trade Center Mall to find new retail space. Perhaps more important were her efforts to identify and help small businesses apply for federal and state grants and loans that would help them stay afloat in the difficult transition ahead.

Then the time came for her own transition. After interviewing for the position of Director of Commercial Leasing and Development with the Office of Institutional Real Estate and she moved uptown. Trading the World Trade Center’s subterranean mall for her new office with a peaceful park-side view was not an easy transition for Carol Shuchman, largely because of colleagues lost in the fall of the towers and others she left behind after 18 years with Port Authority. But moving to Columbia University, it is the sense of community in Upper Manhattan that is helping Shuchman find her niche.

“Carol comes to Columbia with an extensive background in retail leasing and also brings the unusual perspective of someone who has worked with broader public issues, which is a combination of work experiences that is very hard to find,” said Bill Scott, deputy vice president for Institutional Real Estate (IRE).

Shuchman was at a Brown University master’s degree in sociology with a concentration in demography that she took a job as a demographer and population analyst in the Port Authority’s planning department. After almost 13 years working on a variety of projects, she moved into retail management.

Over the past five years she helped to transform the former Macy’s World Trade Center into one of the nation’s top grossing retail complexes. This combination of experience, understanding and analyzing the diversity of neighborhoods, a solid track record in identifying and attracting retail that fits an available space, and a genuine knack for developing solid relationships with business owners is what Shuchman brings to Columbia.

When I am managing a property, I find that I become personally connected to the business and come to feel very strongly about it,” said Shuchman. “That is one of the things I like about Columbia University. People have a feeling that the University and the neighborhood belongs to them and that they have a stake in what is happening in its future.”

Columbia manages about 100 small retail spaces and offices in Upper Manhattan. Most are located on major thoroughfares such as Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue above 110th Street, running north to the Health Sciences campus at 168th Street. As Director of Commercial Leasing and Development, Shuchman will add new businesses to vacant office and business spaces, act as property manager, and help guide ongoing storefront renovation projects. She is poised to build upon the recent retail and streetscape improvements that have contributed to the revival of upper Broadway street life. Over the past couple of years, new businesses such as Naussbaum and Wu bakery, Milano market, restaurants Le Monde and Delux, and most recently the new adventure gear shop Wendy Corner, were brought to Columbia retail space in response to needs expressed by the community. The influx of new neighborhood goods and services and a series of historic storefront renovations that brought back elements of turn-of-the-century Broadway have contributed to the growing popularity of residential Morning-side Heights.

As Shuchman learns more about the neighborhood and the goods and services that the communities need and want, she also hopes to extend the Broadway revival to the Amsterdam corridor, which she says suffers from a lack of retail energy and diversity. The result would be a streetscape transformation past six p.m.

Shuchman will also be working with the community and University to help select retail for the new Social Work School building on the rise at Amsterdam and 121st Street.

“What I like about this area is it is really a community. People above 96th Street shop and eat locally, and they all seem to have some connection with Columbia,” said Shuchman. “They think that more good establishments, dry goods stores, a bakery and clothing stores are possibilities for me to bring to the area. People want to shop locally and they need to be able to get what they are looking for in their own neighborhoods.”

Leaving her office window at the bare trees of Morningside Park, Shuchman muses on the whirlwind of the past five months.

“I’ve realized that if the world had not occurred in this city, then anything can happen,” Shuchman said. “Coming to Columbia is an exciting new opportunity for me. I’ve gone from one end of the island to the other, but people here have been wonderful and already I feel that I belong.”

Philosophy’s Kitcher Seeks to Establish Priorities For Scientific Research in Democratic Society

BY JAMES DEVITT

Philosophy professor Philip Kitcher offers a democratic plan in order to establish priorities for scientific research in “Science, Truth and Democracy” (Oxford 2001), which the New York Times Book Review described as “a remarkable illustration of the sheer force of thought, the conceptual firepower, conferred by successful training in philosophy.”

In explaining his work, Kitcher said he sees an “analogy between the practice of science and the making of maps. Just as there is not a universal atlas, there is no universal, complete science—only bits and pieces of science that respond to human curiosities and practical needs.”

There is no timeless standard for constructing the kinds of science we want. The challenge is to create well-ordered science—that is, science that promotes the collective good. That leads us to the basic philosophical question ‘What is the collective good that science should be trying to promote?’

As a process for creating well-ordered science, Kitcher rejects the ideas of pure democracy, in which all citizens vote to determine the course of scientific research, as well as decision-making by scientists, policymakers or government leaders.

Instead he suggests that the collective good would be defined by an “ideal discussion” among different parties informed about the possibilities of science as well as the needs and interests of society.

“The kinds of science that should be pursued are those that would be endorsed by that discussion,” Kitcher explained.

“How to get social institutions to mimic that discussion is a difficult empirical question. To address it, I advocate establishing a philosophical foundation to feed into empirical work in several fields, including political science and sociology. The result of this would be the construction of institutions that would determine the standards for the pursuit of science.”

“You can’t get anywhere in answering fundamental questions about the role of science in society until you have some clear idea of the goal,” he added. “That’s what any notion of well-ordered science tries to provide.”


Kitcher is also an affiliated faculty member of Columbia’s Center for Science, Policy and Politics at the Washington, D.C.-based center that aims to foster outcome-based policies for publicly funded scientific research.