



Department of
Social Services

Steven Banks
Commissioner

Joslyn Carter
DHS Administrator

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February 23, 2021

Mr. Albert D'Angelo
Chair, Bronx Community Board 11
1741 Colden Avenue
Bronx, NY 10462

Dear Chairperson D'Angelo,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding suggested locations in Bronx Community Board 11 that you believe DSS-DHS should consider for potential use as shelter. We understand that you are proposing these suggestions as alternatives to the current location of the proposed DSS-DHS shelter slated to open at 1682 Stillwell Avenue, a high-quality, borough-based transitional housing facility that we have sited under the Mayor's *Turning the Tide* plan, which will serve and support 200 single adult men experiencing homelessness from this community and surrounding communities in the Bronx as they stabilize their lives.

As you know as the head of the Community Board, for the past three years we have sent a letter to Community Boards, Council Members, and other elected officials throughout the city inviting community leaders to join us at the table in addressing homelessness across the five boroughs, in particular by helping to identify viable sites within/across communities that can be proposed to us by not-for-profit service providers through our open-ended RFP process. [As Commissioner Banks has indicated](#), "Nobody wants to see families with children or single adults without a roof over their heads on the street, and every night we have a legal obligation to provide shelter. So, we have to move forward as quickly as possible when not-for-profit partners identify sites to us, because the alternative is the streets or even more commercial hotels."

Quality proposals must reflect the borough-based approach and equitable siting goals that are central to our transformation plan and be available in the timeframe that we need to address the demand for shelter that we are legally and morally obligated to provide. Up until this most recent correspondence, which we received after notifying the community about our need to move forward with this site at Stillwell, we had not received any proposals in response to our requests.

Nevertheless, we paused our plan for Stillwell and evaluated the locations that you proposed. In order for a proposed site to be viable for consideration, the developer or property owner, as the sole entity with the authority to determine how their property will/can be used, must be supportive and committed to participating and working with a not-for-profit service provider in that undertaking.

After conducting a review of the suggestions that we have received from community leaders , including the four locations you reference, we determined that none are viable in our required timeframe to meet the need for increased shelter capacity this year to support single adult New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. The shelter at 1682 Stillwell Avenue can open within our timeline goal of December 2021. In contrast, the alternative locations are not viable because they cannot be opened within the required timeframe, it is not clear that the owners are actually willing to work with a not-for-profit provider to develop a shelter site, and/or the square footage does not provide sufficient space for programming and bed capacity.

At the same time, we want to assure you that the high-quality shelter we have proposed to site at 1682 Stillwell Avenue will be a vital resource for New Yorkers, especially Bronxites, who are experiencing homelessness, with our not-for-profit partner providing the social services and supports they deserve to help them get back on their feet, closer to the support networks and anchors of life in communities they last called home.

To that end, we are continuing with the plan for our not-for-profit social service provider partner Lantern Group to develop and manage a high-quality facility at 1682 Stillwell Avenue. Lantern Group's proposal to operate 1682 Stillwell Avenue as a high-quality, borough-based shelter will bring our City closer to the goal of being able to provide all of our neighbors who fall on hard times with the dignified support and critical resources they deserve in their home borough and communities. Once the shelter is open, as we have already committed, we will establish a Community Advisory Board for community engagement and to address any concerns that may arise.

We appreciate your ongoing dialogue as we work to ensure our neighbors experiencing homelessness can access the services and supports they deserve as they get back on their feet. Of course, you can continue to contact me or my staff directly about any concerns that may arise.

Thank you for your dedication to supporting New Yorkers in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joslyn Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joslyn Carter, LCSW
DHS Administrator