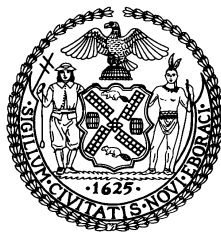


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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

June 15, 2021

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I write to you to express a number of concerns regarding your Administration's plans for a men's homeless shelter at 138-50 Queens Boulevard in Briarwood, which is opposed by not only the community, but also the entirety of Queens Community Board 8 in support of Briarwood.

Above all, I am deeply concerned about the proposed location for this shelter. Not only would it put children, local residents, and shelter residents in harm's way, it would also economically devastate the Briarwood section of Queens Boulevard. This is a *very* different shelter plan than the existing Briarwood shelter for families, which has housed the homeless for many years without incident under the strict and watchful eyes of the service provider, The Salvation Army. It is clear that Briarwood is not opposed to homeless shelters and that this community is already doing its part in "Turning the Tide" on homelessness — but the proposed Queens Boulevard location is *entirely* inappropriate.

The City's current plan would place a 175-bed, adult male "barracks-type" shelter in the midst of a number of locations frequented by large groups of children. This proposed site is across the street from the Hoover-Manton children's playground, Archbishop Molloy High School, and the Queens Library's Briarwood branch. By your Administration's own estimate, approximately 40 percent of the shelter's residents are expected to be mentally ill and/or drug abusers.

Therefore, this proposed shelter absolutely poses a clear and present danger to our local youth, especially since shelter residents are not required to avail themselves of *any* treatment. Placing this type of shelter within such close proximity to hundreds of children is grossly irresponsible and dangerous. This is, of course, completely unacceptable.

Additionally, given the shelter's projected population which, as stated above, a large portion of whom are struggling with mental illness and substance abuse — this location would be harmful to the very individuals the City seeks to help. The proposed site is adjoined to a marijuana dispensary, and just one block away from a liquor store. Placing such a shelter so close to these substances is counterproductive to the stated mission of your Administration's "Turning the Tide" initiative. It will inevitably — and unnecessarily — pose challenges to shelter residents who

genuinely wish to turn their lives around. And, as stated above, this proposed shelter threatens the public safety of Briarwood's local residents – especially its children. Simply put – it is an unsafe location for all parties involved.

Furthermore, this proposed shelter would adversely impact homeowners economically near the proposed site. The Briarwood community and I have gone to great lengths several years ago to rezone to allow for mixed use development to attract development and investment. The benefits of those economic revitalization efforts were beginning to be realized, but are now paralyzed by the mere specter of this men's shelter. And this shelter would vaporize untold millions in residential property values from local co-op owners and homeowners. This represents an unconscionable taking from the homeowners who have spent a lifetime to build a home equity nest egg.

No matter how noble the intent of the "Turning the Tide" initiative, *no* facility justifies the peril to public safety and the economic devastation that would be visited on the Briarwood community by this poorly proposed shelter, the location of which seems designed to inflict the most harm on the most people. I suspect, however, that unfortunate reality was not by design. It was, instead, borne out a total disregard for the well-being of a community that has thrived for generations in favor of a punitive notion that stable neighborhoods must, for the sake of "fairness," pay the price for the homelessness epidemic that your Administration has helped to create.

I respectfully request that your office commence work immediately with DHS, which, I am compelled to report, has been arrogant, patronizing and dismissive in the extreme to Briarwood community leaders throughout this process. This is in contrast to the proposed service provider, Westhab, which has at least been earnest and cordial in community discussions. Please engage with DHS to abandon the plans for this proposed homeless shelter and locate an alternate location that would much better serve both the community, as well as the inhabitants of any new shelter. I implore you to take prompt attention to this matter and we await your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Gennaro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "G".

James F. Gennaro
New York City Council Member
City Council District 24