

GREATER HARLEM
COALITION

Syderia Asberry-Chresfield, Cofounder

Carolyn Brown, Cofounder

Shawn Hill, Cofounder

tetshill@gmail.com

860.398.0938

May 28th, 2021

Ms. JosylN Carter, LCSW, Administrator
NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS)
33 Beaver Street – 17th Floor
New York, NY 10004

**Re: Request from Harlem Community to The NYC Department
of Homeless Services
(Excessive Density of DHS Facilities in Harlem)**

Dear Administrator Carter,

Our community is contacting you to request the diffusion and dispersion of the overly dense concentration of DHS facilities in Harlem & East Harlem.

This request is a matter of the highest priority for our community. The families, schools, churches, and business owners of Harlem have long sought a meaningful reduction of the burden that DHS programs place on an already vulnerable community. The reasons for this urgent request are as follows:

- 1) **Our streets are flooded with “high-need” individuals.** The heavy concentration of DHS facilities in Harlem brings into a small geographic area an unconscionable density of homeless men who are often suffering from multiple (and complex) challenges. Many of these men suffer from chemical dependency, mental health ailments, or were formerly incarcerated. A staggering number of these troubled individuals continually wander our streets & subways, congregate, buy drugs, and sleep on sidewalks. This dense “clustering” of homeless men with special needs has led to an extremely visible and dangerous street culture in our residential neighborhood. (Neighborhood residents are especially fearful of the stretch on 125th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues, a notorious junction in Harlem where hordes of troubled individuals gather, daily. This junction is a magnet for drug dealers who prey on these troubled individuals). Many of these troubled homeless men flow into our community every day from facilities on Randall’s Island:
 - Clarke Thomas Men’s Shelter, a 234-bed facility for homeless men;

- Schwartz Assessment Center, a 377-bed homeless shelter for men;
- Odyssey House, a 420-unit facility; and
- Help USA Keener Homeless Facility, another shelter for homeless men.

2) **Many Residents in Harlem report their quality of life being severely affected.**

Harlem's unusually high number of DHS facilities has had a devastating effect on the daily lives of many people in Harlem:

- Families do not feel safe walking the sidewalks with their children. This fear persists during daytime hours, not just at night;
- Commuting workers are fearful of entering mass-transit entrances, such as the Metro North station at 125th Street & Park Avenue and the subways at 125th & Lexington and 125th & Lenox;
- Restaurants note that customers report being uncomfortable and do not return;
- Criminal activity overwhelms our police precincts and contributes to Harlem being the 2nd highest crime rate neighborhood in all five boroughs of New York City;
- Storefront Owners experience greater rates of disturbances, shoplifting, and often have to take on the additional cost of hiring security guards to man front doors;
- Business offices are reluctant to open in the neighborhood. The recently rebuilt landmark "Corn Exchange" office building at 125th Street & Park Avenue has been vacant since it opened, five years ago. (No businesses will occupy space there due to the persistent presence of loitering men).

3) **There is a disproportionate concentration of DHS facilities in our area.** Compared to other communities, Harlem is burdened with an unusually high number of DHS facilities. Wealthier and often whiter communities within the five boroughs have successfully prevented DHS facilities from being sited in their neighborhoods. Harlem and East Harlem, however, have more than their "fair share" of DHS facilities. (DHS's "Turning The Tide" initiative has not yet yielded any results for our community).

Harlem is home to the highest concentration of low-income families in New York. Our densely residential neighborhood is not equipped to handle the burden that such a high number of DHS facilities brings to our area. Our community is already burdened by poor health outcomes, the impact of historic redlining, environmental racism, and the excessive siting of drug treatment facilities.

Our community requests immediate relief. Specifically, we request DHS to take the following actions for Harlem, to achieve "distributional equity" of homeless facilities:

- Cease the creation of any new DHS facilities in Harlem and East Harlem;
- Cease the renewal of existing DHS sites that operate within a two-block radius of any other DHS sites in Harlem and East Harlem;
- Cease the expansion of any existing DHS sites in Harlem and East Harlem;

- Produce a plan to redistribute Harlem's DHS facilities more equitably to other New York City neighborhoods; and
- Open permanent channels of communication with our community, in order to exchange dialogue, obtain neighborhood input, and convey updates in a continuous manner.

We invite you to schedule a walking tour with us to fully experience the severity of this issue. Please contact Shawn Hill at (860) 398-0938 or tetshill@gmail.com for additional information or to schedule an appointment.

Sincerely,



Syderia Asberry-Chresfield.



Carolyn A. Brown PHD.



Shawn Hill

Founders of the Greater Harlem Coalition (an organization of 6,000 residents, businesses, churches, and cultural institutions in Harlem. <https://greaterharlem.nyc/>)

cc: Steven Banks, Commissioner, Department of Social Services / NYC HRA
 Benjamin Charvat, PhD, LCSW, Deputy Commissioner Policy & Planning, DHS
 Bill Rosado, Executive Director, DHS
 Lexi Ivers, Policy & Strategic Planning, DHS
 Molly Wasow Park, First Deputy Commissioner, DHS
 Phuntsok Tsering, Capacity Coordinator, DHS
 Robert Cowan, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, DHS
 Ellery Gillette, Asst Commissioner Capacity Planning, DHS
 Lourdes Mendez, Executive Director, DHS
 Roxanne Edwards, Director Of Operations, DHS
 Edward Cyrus, Agency Attorney, DHS
 Christina Powell, Agency Attorney, DHS
 Arlene Bogad, Managing Director, DHS
 Michael Reed, Director, DHS
 Daniel Rodriguez, Deputy Director, DHS
 Trinity Hillman, Assistant Commissioner, DHS
 Jewell Curry, Community Coordinator, DHS
 Shawn Reece, Director of Facilities, DHS
 Jesse Zeigler, Deputy Director, DHS
 Saratu Ghartey, First Deputy Commissioner, NYC Human Resources Administration
 Gary Jenkins, Administrator, Human Resources Administration (HRA)
 Molly Murphy, First Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Social Services
 Martha Kenton, Executive Director, NYC Department of Social Services

The Greater Harlem Coalition is comprised of the following tenant associations, churches, schools, businesses, cultural institutions, and retailers:

Block Association of West 118th Street
 100-168 West 121st Street Resident Block Association
 118 Street Block Association
 120th Street Block Association

124 East 117th Street Tenants Association
 125th Street Business Improvement District
 128th Street Block Association
 1775 Houses Tenants Association
 314 - Pizza, Pasta & Wine Bar

97-98 Lexington & Park Ave. Neighbors
A. Philip Randolph Square Neighborhood
Alliance
A.K. Houses Tenants Association
Advocates 4 The Community
Asberry and Associates, LLC
ATAPE Group, LLC
CentralCasting Solutions LLC
Chaiwali
Chocolat Restaurant & Bar
CIVITAS
Clay
Columbus Distributors
Compass Realty
Covington Realty Services
D and D Enterprise
Dorrence Brooks Property Owners &
Residents Association
DR3J Consultants
Edward Jones
Elaine Perry Associates
Ephesus SDA Church
Eye Cycle
Freeland Liquor
Friendly Hands Ministry
Friends of the Harriett Tubman Monument
Future Giants Organization
Gastiaburo + Stella Real Estate
Ginjan Cafe
Graham Court Renters Association
Greater Calvary Baptist Church
Hakimian Organization
Halstead Manhattan
Hamilton Terrace Block Association
Harlem American
Harlem Arts Foundation
Harlem Business Alliance
Harlem Lacrosse
Harlem Lofts
Harlem Neighborhood Block Association
Harlem Park to Park
Harlem Properties Inc.
Harlem Shake
Harlem Wine Gallery
HarlemHome
HarlemHoopz
Il Cafe Latte 1
Il Cafe Latte 2
Indian Summer Harlem
Jacqueline Allmond Cuisine INC
Le Petit Parisien

Lenox to 5th 124th Street Block Association
LenoxFive 127th Street Block Association
Lido
Malcolm Pharmacy
Mirada Home Owners Association
MoHo Dance
Mount Morris Park Community Improvement
Association
MXB United
Neighbors United of West 132nd Street
Block Association
New 123rd Street Block Association (Lenox
- 7th)
New York Council for Housing Development
Fund Companies, Inc.
Open Hands Legal Services
Paris Blues Jazz Club
Pativity, LLC
Progressives Educating New Yorkers, Inc.
R. Kenyatta Punter and Associates
Rubys Vintage
Sayers and Doers
Silent Procession Nyc4pr
Silicon Harlem
SottoCasa Pizzeria
StreetSquash
Sugar Hill Concerned Neighbors Group
Super Nice Coffee and Bakery
T.H.E. Works
Union Settlement House
United New Church of Christ
Upholstery Lab
Uptown Democratic Club
Uptown Townhouse
Valeries Signature Salon
Virgo Hardware
West 119th Block Association
West 121st Street Block Association
West 126th Street Block Association
West 130th Street Homeowners Association
West 132nd Street Block Association
West 135th Street Block Association
West 136th Street Block Association
Wynn Optics