

Manhattan Community Board 2 Questions re: 10 Wooster/ 349 Canal Street Shelter

Follow-Up Questions and Responses

Design

1. Where will the main entrance for clients be located? **We will discuss this matter further in our meeting with the Community Board on Wednesday.**
2. Where will the service entrance be located for food, waste, laundry and other deliveries and pickups? **We will discuss this matter further in our meeting with the Community Board on Wednesday.**
3. How many men will each dorm room house? **At some of our high-quality transitional housing facilities, including select sites for single adults experiencing homelessness, clients reside in “dorm-style” sleeping arrangements. At this facility, when operating at full capacity, approximately 8-12 individuals will reside in each room.**
4. What community spaces can clients use when not sleeping, working or receiving services? (A: Recreational space, day room....)
**At the high-quality facility at 10 Wooster Street/349 Canal Street, there will be a recreation space, a day/resource room, and cafeteria space on-site for clients to utilize.
Note that: clients are permitted to remain inside the facility throughout the day and there are no DSS-DHS policies that require clients to leave the site for any specified amount or period of time during the day.**
5. Will the capacity in the community spaces be sufficient if 100% of the clients are home during non-sleeping hours? **Yes.**
6. Where will clients be permitted to smoke? **Working together with the not-for-profit service provider partner that will operate the site, we are in the process of identifying a location where clients residing at the facility can smoke**
7. What are the recreation facilities expected to be? **There will be a recreational specialist on staff who will create and facilitate appropriate recreational activities and programs for clients.**
8. Will there be any rooftop access or communal space for clients? **As indicated above, there are communal spaces throughout the facility for clients, including a recreation space, a day/resource room, and cafeteria space.**
9. Will there be x-ray machines and metal detectors at the main entrance, other entrances? **A safe and secure environment is critical to the success of any program facility – and DSS-DHS is committed to prioritizing the safety of clients, staff, and community members alike. At this facility, our not-for-profit service provider Westhab will provide on-site security around-the-clock, with a minimum of two security officers located at the entrance to control building access, monitor security cameras, and oversee metal detectors/access control.**
10. Will the building be wired for WiFi? **Yes.**
11. The building is zoned M1-5B. Does that allow for residential stays beyond 30 days? **As with all DSS-DHS facilities, the high-quality transitional housing facility at 10 Wooster Street/27 West 11th Street will meet all DOB and other relevant local/State regulations and policies, including those related to residential zoning policies. To that point, in the vast majority of cases, clients will continue to reside at this facility until permanent housing is identified and they transition into their new homes.**
12. Many neighbors stressed that an entrance on Canal Street - better-lit, more commercial, wider - would be significantly better than an entrance on Wooster St. and would make the

project more acceptable. We will discuss this matter further in our meeting with the Community Board on Wednesday.

13. Are there any environmental concerns with the structure in terms of pollutants, chemicals, etc., considering the building's prior use as a parking garage? What type of environmental testing will be done?

All of our sites, including at 10 Wooster Street/347 Canal Street, undergo an environmental assessment study (EAS) before a site can open. Throughout this process, we work closely with relevant agencies to ensure that each site meets the health, safety, and environmental standards mandated by New York State law.

To that end, while the EAS for this facility has not yet been completed, it will be completed and issued prior to the site's opening.

14. What types of alterations will be made to the building in order to make the building more suitable as a shelter, i.e. improvement of ventilation and new / larger windows to allow natural light into the dorm rooms?

The landlord is in the process of renovating the whole building to meet the high standards of care we strive to provide New Yorkers experiencing homelessness at our transitional housing facilities. This includes adding walls to partition rooms, including but not limited to office space, recreational space, dorm/sleeping space, and bathrooms. The landlord is also implementing a new ventilation system, sprinkler system, and generator, and adding a fire alarm system and many other building upgrades to ensure the facility complies with all relevant DOB, FDNY, and local/State guidelines.

Client Rules

15. What are curfew hours? At all shelters for single adults experiencing homelessness, there is a 10:00 PM curfew. Clients who may be employed with late work hours will receive passes to return to the facility after curfew based on their documented work schedule.
16. What time must residents leave their dorm rooms? What hours will clients be allowed in the dormitory rooms? As indicated above, clients are permitted to remain inside the facility throughout the day, which has been the case for many years. To ensure individuals remain engaged, we and our not-for-profit provider partners offer daytime programming, activities, and appointments.
17. What happens if a client arrives after curfew hours? Will he be housed? There are no circumstances in which a client is turned away to sleep in the streets for missing curfew. If a client arrives after curfew and the facility is filled, they will be transferred to an alternative DSS-DHS site. In addition, as indicated above, clients who may be employed with late work hours will receive passes to return to the facility after curfew based on their documented work schedule.
18. What is the "good neighbor policy" that clients sign and how are violations addressed? A safe and secure environment is critical to the success of any program facility – and DHS is committed to prioritizing the safety of clients, staff, and community members alike. Additionally, our top priority is ensuring any new facility that we site is integrated seamlessly into the community and that our clients are welcomed as neighbors. We are committed to continuing to maintain open engagement and productive dialogue with the community, including with the local NYPD precinct as appropriate. Furthermore, at shelter locations, we implement a "Good Neighbor Policy," outlining expectations for client behavior while residing at the facility. Shelter Operations Staff and Security at this location will conduct regular rounds around the perimeter of the facility to ensure clients are complying with the Good Neighbor Policy and to engage each person encountered about services available to them. If clients do not adhere to the Good Neighbor Policy, staff work to engage the client, reminding them of this Code of Conduct and working to address

possible underlying challenges. If it is determined that a client would be better served in another location, they may be transferred to an alternative DSS-DHS location that better meets their needs.

19. Will residents be required to leave premises? **No. See above.**

20. For clients with substance abuse addictions, will there be any drug testing? **High-quality transitional housing is far more than just a room to sleep in or a roof over one's head. At these sites we work in partnership with experienced not-for-profit social service providers like Westhab whose dedicated staff connect clients every day with robust wraparound resources, including case management, housing placement assistance, and health and mental health services. To that end, at this site, Westhab will provide an array of on-site services and off-site service linkages for clients, including referrals to substance use treatment, where applicable. For individuals experiencing substance use challenges, we will of course work to provide/connect them with substance use services, that can help them address those challenges.**

21. Will the shelter house sex offenders?

The City of New York places all clients in appropriate locations in accordance with State Law – and we provide shelter to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness regardless of background.

All verifiably homeless New Yorkers have a right to shelter regardless of background. This includes helping people rebuild their lives and grow through second chances as they get back on their feet. Other than following State Law as relates to residency requirements, we also have to follow the law on providing shelter to all who are experiencing homelessness, regardless of background, since New York is under court order to provide shelter to all those who need it – and it would therefore be unlawful to discriminate against individuals based on their backgrounds or prior experiences.

No residency restricted sex offenders will be placed at this location.

22. Will residents be permitted visitors? **No.**

Distribution of shelters throughout NYC; density

23. How does CD 2's share of homeless shelters (as of the time 10 Wooster/349 Canal St. opens) compare to other districts in the city?

The Fair Share Criteria, adopted by the City Planning Commission in accordance with the City Charter, attempt to foster an equitable distribution of public facilities throughout the City by establishing a set of considerations that must be taken into account by City agencies when selecting sites for new City facilities. These criteria include the City's stated need for the facility, the size of the facility, the facility's ability to provide efficient and cost-effective delivery of services, the distribution of similar facilities throughout the City, the concentration of facilities providing similar services, the site's accessibility to public and vehicular transit, the potential effect of the facility on neighborhood character, the proposed facility's consistency with the Borough President's strategic policy statements and Community Board's statement of district needs, and the consideration of alternative sites. The Fair Share Criteria do not set numerical limits on the City's ability to site facilities in community districts; instead, these Criteria require that concentration of facilities be considered and disclosed, among other considerations, in making siting decisions.

Because homelessness impacts every community across the five boroughs, our focus is on ensuring that each community has sufficient high-quality, borough-based resources to

serve/support individuals who may fall on hard times and experience homelessness, so that they can get back on their feet nearer to communities they last called home and closer to the anchors of their lives, like family, healthcare, employment, houses of worship, and more.

To that end, at this time, there are currently no DSS-DHS traditional shelter facilities operating and running in Manhattan Community District 2 to serve/support individuals/families who may experience homelessness in Manhattan CD2.

For additional context, please see the attached map outlining the current DSS-DHS footprint by borough.

24. What services for single adult homeless men exist within Soho currently? Within a half-mile radius? Within a 1-mile radius? As indicated above, at this time, there are currently no DSS-DHS traditional shelter facilities in Manhattan Community District 2, meaning that this community does not have any high-quality shelter capacity to support New Yorkers experiencing homelessness who may come from this community and fall on hard times. In terms of other City facilities in the area, the Fair Share Analysis being developed by DSS-DHS will outline and consider various fair share criteria developed by the City Planning Commission, including proximity to neighborhood facilities and other services for the shelter site and its residents in the area. Additionally, not-for-profit social service provider partner Westhab has extensive relationships with and experience connecting individuals they serve to qualified locally-based services in the broader community.
25. There is concern that introducing a population of 200 people in one building will have outsized impact on density in this low-density area. Every neighborhood across New York City has a part to play in addressing this citywide challenge. Under the de Blasio Administration, as outlined in our *Turning the Tide* plan, the City and the nonprofit service provider partners we work with to help our neighbors experiencing homelessness get back on their feet are committed to ongoing, open engagement and working with all community stakeholders, including local elected officials, community board members, local block associations, as well as faith-based and community-based organizations so that, together, we can ensure this facility is integrated seamlessly into the community and our clients are warmly welcomed. To that end, we will establish a Community Advisory Board (CAB) which will hold regular meetings and maintain direct lines of communication between staff, including on-site security, and communities to ensure any community concerns are proactively addressed as they arise.
26. There have been several cases - CCS, Acacia - where the city was defrauded, services were not provided, and "high-quality" was actually low quality. What is the oversight mechanism that ensures that this shelter will operate as promised?
Under this Administration, DSS-DHS has spearheaded several initiatives to strengthen the management and oversight of shelter programs, with the end goal of improving the conditions experienced by our clients. Our multipronged approach to further support our not-for-profit providers has included reforming our contract process, updating our approach to funding and performance evaluations, improving shelter conditions through real time tracking systems and strengthening quality assurance practices across the system as well as phasing out providers that do not meet standards.
27. How many shelters in the city house a single adult population of this size? Can you share with us some of their locations and operators so that we can acquaint ourselves with the experience of living next door to one? There are currently more than 100 DSS-DHS transitional housing facilities throughout New York City serving single adults experiencing

homelessness, with shelter capacity (i.e. units/beds available in the facility) ranging from fewer than 25 to nearly 250. However, as you might already know, we cannot confirm specific locations because shelter locations/the addresses of locations where social service recipients are residing are protected by NYS Social Services Law.

28. How does a shelter of this size rank in terms of the city's shelters overall? How many are larger than this? How many are smaller than this? What is the median size? Etc.

As indicated above, the size of DSS-DHS facilities is determined based on a number of considerations relating to the configuration of the individual site and the 200-bed limit in local law for most single adult shelters.

Security

29. The New York Rescue Mission on Lafayette Street is an area of existing concern. What level of police activity does it draw? What are the crime statistics near this shelter? In what ways is the Mission similar and different to 10 Wooster/349 Canal? **The New York Rescue Mission is not a City program nor is it affiliated with NYC DHS.**

30. There is concern that the presence of these residents invites those who prey on them, such as drug dealers. How will the security team be able to address activity by non-residents?

31. What relationship will the shelter's security team have with NYPD and the 1st precinct?

32. It would be helpful if this site employed a practice of creating security ambassadors, as are used in Battery Park City, to continuously patrol blocks, creating an early warning system to NYPD for crime so as not to see an increase in criminal incidents. **A safe and secure environment is critical to the success of any program facility – and DHS is committed to prioritizing the safety of clients, staff and community members alike.**

- a. **Westhab will provide on-site security around-the-clock. A minimum of two security officers will be located at the entrance to control building access and to monitor security cameras, which will be located throughout the building and grounds. There will be a minimum of eight security staff per shift and one additional supervisor overseeing security staff per shift.**
- b. **Westhab will also provide a 24-hour open line for the community to provide feedback in a timely manner and to immediately address any concerns that may arise.**
- c. **As an added measure, a total of 110 security cameras will be installed throughout the building and across the shelter grounds. These cameras allow security officers to continually monitor compliance with house regulations and good neighbor policies both in and around the facility, acting as a deterrent for inappropriate or illegal activities. Recordings will be made available to authorities with proper legal documentation in the event that arrests or prosecution are warranted.**
- d. **In addition, as indicated above, Shelter Operations Staff and Security at this location will conduct regular rounds around the perimeter of the facility to ensure clients are complying with the Good Neighbor Policy and to engage each person encountered about services available to them**
- e. **We are committed to continuing to maintain open engagement and productive dialogue with the community, including with the local NYPD precinct as appropriate.**

33. Can Westhab provide more detail on the other homeless shelters it operates, as these are not included in the "Impact Reports" published on its website? **Westhab currently operates seven single adult shelters and three families with children sites in New York City, with**

these facilities located in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Here is some reporting about Westhab's approach to serving and supporting New Yorkers in need across these facilities, with dedication, compassion, and great care: <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/nyer-of-the-week/2021/01/11/valerie-smith-westhab-homeless-outreach>

Westhab

34. Can Westhab share updated financial reports? Westhab's most recent 990 Form can be found on its website: www.westhab.org.

35. Can DSS and/or Westhab provide information on the track record of its other shelters in New York City?: What is the recidivism rate of its clients becoming homeless again? What is the recidivism rate of those with a criminal background to commit another crime?

This Administration has made vital progress addressing decades of disinvestment/underfunding, which resulted in the haphazard shelter infrastructure that we inherited and have had to reform. From strengthening shelter and phasing out the ineffective stop-gap measures of prior Administrations, to improving services with creative new approaches and investments, to rebuilding rental assistance and rehousing programs which have helped more than 165,000 people obtain or secure housing, to spearheading the first-in-the-nation right-to-counsel initiative helping tenants keep their homes which has driven down evictions by more than 40 percent, we continue to use every tool at our disposal to ensure New Yorkers can access the resources they need to get back on their feet.

For those single adults who utilize rental assistance/rehousing programs, any returns to shelter are very minimal (fewer than 6%).

As a result, through the comprehensive strategies we've implemented, we broke the growth trajectory of homelessness in NYC, held the shelter census flat for several years for the first time in over a decade prior to the pandemic, and today the NYC DSS-DHS shelter census (i.e. total population across DSS-DHS shelter facilities) is at approximately 49,000 down from a high point of approximately 61,000.

36. What information can DSS provide to demonstrate that Westhab is a high-quality operator?

- For new shelters, DHS has an open-ended RFP process, which means proposals from not-for-profit providers are accepted on a rolling basis.
- When a proposal is submitted, the quality of the proposal is evaluated and scored by agency program experts working with the Department of Social Services Contracts Office in accordance with New York City Procurement Policy Board Rules and requirements in the Request for Proposals.
- The evaluation includes an assessment of the need for the proposed shelter population capacity (Families with Children, Adult Families, Single Adults) at the location, the viability of the building, the scope of the client services, the experience of the provider, pricing and other operational matters.
- The proposal is also reviewed by Agency leadership for consistency with the borough-based approach, and the capacity and equitable siting goals the plan will achieve when fully implemented.
- Here is some reporting about Westhab's approach to serving and supporting New Yorkers in need across these facilities, with dedication, compassion, and great care: <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/nyer-of-the-week/2021/01/11/valerie-smith-westhab-homeless-outreach>

37. Has the design of dorm rooms with 8-20 occupants been successful in other Westhab shelters in allowing for harmonious conditions? How does Westhab manage interpersonal relationships in its other shelters, if at all? The dormitory setting at congregate shelter locations enables the not-for-profit social service provider that operates the site to administer services, engage clients, and monitor/supervise health/safety/wellbeing more easily, as there are fewer closed doors – and not every individual is best served by living independently behind closed doors at this time (for example, for individuals with mental health challenges who are utilizing more intensive services, they may not be best served behind closed doors—and in fact, ensuring they have a roommate(s) can actually provide a harm-reduction approach that improves safety/supervision). **If there are challenges within a dorm room between clients, the parties may be moved to separate dorms if a mediated resolution cannot be reached. In some cases, the individual may be transferred to another facility depending on the issues presented.**
38. In addition to providing safe conditions within the shelter, the community expects Westhab to extend that safety into the immediate neighborhood. What is the practice for that? Is there a single person at the shelter who maintains relationships with neighbors? **The Program Director and Security Manager are the individuals at Westhab who will be in regular communication with community stakeholders regarding any problems/concerns. In addition, as indicated above, Westhab will also be conducting periodic community patrols around the perimeter of the facility to ensure that clients are complying with DSS-DHS's "Good Neighbor Policy."**

Operation

39. What will the caseworker load be? What are the city's minimum requirements? Will Westhab meet the minimum or will its staff exceed that? How will this staffing be codified into your operating regulations (so that the community can be confident in these numbers)? **All DSS-DHS shelters are operated in compliance with State regulations with oversight from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Further, DSS-DHS operates in compliance with all Local Law requirements. Each case manager will focus on serving/supporting/assisting approximately 20 individuals experiencing homelessness as they get back on their feet.**
40. In what other ways, if any, does Westhab intend to exceed NYC contract minimums? **The primary focus of the shelter and the services that we provide, together with our not-for-profit social service provider partners, is to help New Yorkers experiencing homelessness identify and move into permanent housing in order to get back on their feet. In addition to this vital mission, which continues 24/7/365, pandemic or not, Westhab also focuses on connecting clients with employment opportunities and income-building programs, which will promote self-sustainability and independence once they are placed into permanent housing. Westhab may also connect individuals with needed services to address other challenges that might impact their lives, including their wellbeing and/or housing placement.**
41. What services will be offered to clients on-site? Will any of these be mandatory or are they all voluntary? **All services are voluntary; however, all clients are strongly encouraged to be engaged in programs and services - be it onsite or through facilitating connections to services within the community (community-based services, local organizations, etc.). On-site services will include case management, individual and group counseling, permanency planning and housing placement assistance, referrals to medical and mental health services, support groups, independent living and life skills workshops, and supports in finding and securing employment.**
42. Does your operating model generally include partnerships with other organizations for programming? Can you provide us with examples of these? As outlined above, our priority

when we site shelters is to be good neighbors and members of the community, with staff able to connect clients to existing and important community-based services if that is their preference. To that end, Westhab has developed relationships with several community-based medical providers, such as Brightpoint and the Floating Hospital. In addition, Westhab case managers work from a data base of employers that we have established long-term relationships with, in an effort to connect clients with employment opportunities.

43. Westhab was proud to share that it had managed to place over 200 individuals into permanent housing during the pandemic year of 2020. Can you help us understand the relevance of this number, in comparison to the city shelter system as a whole or other operators? In the midst of a pandemic, our dedicated staff and not-for-profit social service providers, like Westhab, continued working around-the-clock to serve New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and helping connect them to permanent housing opportunities. For context, over the course of the Administration and across the entire DSS-DHS system, which includes dozens of not-for-profit social service provider partners, the Agency has helped more than 165,000 New Yorkers secure housing through the various rental assistance and rehousing programs that we rebuilt from scratch since 2014. Westhab and their staff have played an important role in this work, as have our other not-for-profit social service provider partners with whom we collaborate in this mission.
44. The survey produced by the Coalition for the Homeless, “View from the Street,” finds that many street homeless choose the outdoors as an alternative to the terrible conditions they’ve experienced in certain homeless shelters. Allowing for some discrepancies in self-reporting and in rumor, these accounts are one of our primary concerns: how can we know if this shelter will be different from those dirty, unsafe, uncaring places described by many street homeless? Over the past several years, following decades of disinvestment, this Administration has made unprecedented investments of about a quarter billion dollars in annual funding for in historically underfunded providers in order to transform our shelter system – including modernizing outdated rates through our model budget process to improve and standardize rates and services, and ensure all of our partners are appropriately funded to provide the supports our clients depend on as they get back on their feet.
 - a. We’ve closed more than 260 shelter sites that did not meet our standards (down from the 647 sites reported in the Turning the Tide plan) and, as mentioned above, sited 89 new high-quality, borough-based shelters, shrinking the DHS shelter footprint by more than 40% —well on our way towards our goal of shrinking the footprint by 45 percent overall.
 - b. We continue to address decades of disinvestment and restore our infrastructure through aggressive repairs, renovations, and funding. Over the past several years since 2016 (since the launch of the Shelter Repair Squad and the subsequent release of the comprehensive “Turning the Tide” plan), the Mayor’s interagency Shelter Repair Squad task force has conducted more than 59,000 shelter inspections, driving down violations in shelter that went unaddressed for many years by more than 93% to an all-time low—and counting. We have also allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to address remaining violations.