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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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April 27, 2022

Hon. Eric Adams  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Gary P. Jenkins, Commissioner  
Department of Social Services  
150 Greenwich St.  
New York, NY 10038

Re: **A RESOLUTION OPPOSING A DROP-IN CENTER WITH STABILIZATION BEDS AT 231 GRAND STREET**

Dear Mayor Adams and Commissioner Jenkins:

At its Full Board meeting on April 26, 2022, CB#2, Manhattan (CB2, Man.), adopted the following resolution:

### **WHEREAS:**

#### **RECORD OF MEETINGS**

1. The Human Services Committee of Manhattan Community Board 2 (CB2) has held and participated in a series of meetings to discuss the proposed establishment of a Drop-In Center with Stabilization Beds at 231 Grand Street in the neighborhood of Chinatown, to be operated by the non-profit organization Housing Works (HW), with more details of such meetings to be provided below; and
2. The first of such meetings was a presentation by HW to the Human Services Committee of CB2 by HW and attended by representatives of NYC Department of Social Services / Department of Homeless Services (DSS/DHS) on February 24, 2022, and which included public comment; and

3. The second of such meetings was CB2's Full Board meeting on March 24, 2022, at which additional public comment was heard<sup>1</sup>; and
4. The third of such meetings was the CB2 Human Services Committee meeting on March 31, 2022, at which a business session was held to discuss the writing of a resolution regarding the proposed shelter; and
5. A written copy of the presentation by Housing Works and Charles King, its Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, can be accessed below as well as on the CB2 website, which also includes a full report from the February 24 meeting; and
  - <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb2/committee-materials/human-services/>
  - English:[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bnpmbszEaYXA1mc9Wd3\\_LxdPeCVIk2\\_D/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bnpmbszEaYXA1mc9Wd3_LxdPeCVIk2_D/view?usp=sharing)
  - Traditional Chinese Characters (for Cantonese Speakers):  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K4c47WKvlnNNGqJK3uAM9JwvPs7\\_sDVC/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K4c47WKvlnNNGqJK3uAM9JwvPs7_sDVC/view?usp=sharing)
  - Simplified Chinese Characters (for Mandarin Speakers):  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K8KEJPLS0B7rza2Wr5-AHU1Q7pMWu4Fm/view?usp=sharing>

## BACKGROUND ON HOUSING WORKS<sup>2</sup>

6. Housing Works (HW) is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 to address homeless among people living with HIV, with the distinction of being the first organization in the United States to house homeless people without regard to their use of drugs in a supportive housing environment, and currently serving over 15,000 low-income New Yorkers including 2,000 people with HIV; and
7. HW's current services include a Federally Qualified Health Center (FWHC) operating five clinics in Brooklyn and Manhattan, as well as over 700 units of supportive housing operated under harm reduction principles that do not prohibit possession of drugs or alcohol, and supportive services which include case management, substance abuse treatment, mental health care, and job retraining; and
8. HW's clientele largely consists of groups which have historically been the subject of marginalization or discrimination, with a client base that is 51% black and 21% Hispanic, nearly 100% at or below the poverty line, 33% which have a history of incarceration, 33% which identify as LGBTQ, 51% which have diagnosed mental health issues, and 26% of which are active substance abusers; and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://youtu.be/j5UD0-LTASM>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.housingworks.org>

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND SITE

9. 231 Grand Street is located on the corner of Bowery and Grand, within both the Chinatown Business Improvement District (BID) and the broader Chinatown neighborhood, and currently consists of an 8-story building which is zoned C6-1G and has an estimated gross floor area of 48,911 sf.<sup>3</sup>; and
10. The building at 231 Grand was formerly the Best Western Hanbee Hotel, which was recently used for non-congregate housing for the homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic from Spring 2020 to Summer 2021, and is currently vacant; and
11. Current activity on the block surrounding 231 Grand consists of a number of senior street vendors selling food, a day care across the street, and businesses including a pharmacy, bank and bakery; and
12. Pending approval of the budget and contract by NYC, HW has stated an intention to open this facility by late Spring, 2022, the building having been recently renovated and in good condition; and
13. As noted on the agenda of the March 10, 2022, Public Hearing of the Mayor’s Office of Contracts, “The contract term shall be from March 1, 2022 to June 30, 2027 with one three-year renewal option from July 1, 2027 to June 30, 2030. The contract amount will be \$63,762,100. CB2, Manhattan. E-PIN #07122P0011001”; and
14. HW intends the site to consist of **a 1) Drop-in Center** and **2) Stabilization Beds** for unsheltered homeless adult men and women, consisting of over 50 “drop-in” chairs and 94 stabilization beds, and an outdoor deck for smoking; and
15. The model is considered the first of its kind and will be evaluated by DSS/DHS for outcomes; and
16. As with all new shelters in New York City, a “Fair Share” analysis is required to be completed prior to opening the shelter which is required to examine conditions by 400-ft, 1000-ft, and 1/2 -mile radius as well as by Community District.; and
17. Although the site is located within Community District 2, which currently has no homeless shelters, the neighborhood of Chinatown currently hosts shelters in Community Districts 1 and 3, with an additional shelter in development in Community District 3; and

## OVERVIEW OF THE DROP-IN CENTER

18. The Drop-In Center is intended to be a 24/7/365 walk-in facility providing meals, shower, changing rooms, and laundry to homeless adult men and women, with 50-or-so lounge chairs available but no beds; and

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<sup>3</sup> <http://maps.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap/>

19. The Drop-In Center will offer a host of services aimed at long-term wellness, with staff including a housing placement specialist, social workers, medical and psychiatric nurse practitioners, and access to telehealth, and with on-site staff which speak English, Mandarin, Cantonese and Spanish; and
20. The facility will follow a “harm-reduction” model, which means that visitors will not undergo checks for illegal substances, with such design intended as a “low-threshold” program in order to reduce barriers to entry and to entice individuals toward receiving social services; and
21. HW will hire peer outreach workers, including from Chinatown, to conduct street outreach in the area and raise awareness among the homeless population regarding the existence of the Drop-In Center; and

#### OVERVIEW OF THE STABILIZATION BEDS

22. The proposed site will also consist of 94 “stabilization” beds, designed for use by adult men and women who have been living without shelter and have refused the traditional shelter that New York City provides, by law, to anyone who requests it; and
23. Candidates will be referred to the stabilization beds from outreach teams from both the Manhattan Outreach Consortium<sup>4</sup> as well as from HW’s owned trained peer outreach workers, and will focus on working in a catchment area that will include Sara D. Roosevelt Park to the east and Washington Square Park to the west but that will seek to cover all nearby areas of need; and
24. Housing Works will be expected, by contract with DSS/DHS, to transition these clients to permanent housing within a period of twelve months; and
25. Similar to the Drop-In Center, the model for use of the stabilization beds is intended to be flexible and “low-threshold,” with the baseline criteria for eligibility to a stabilization bed being evidence of living on the street; and
26. Given the site’s proximity to facilities serving children, sex offenders with residential restrictions would not be permitted to reside at 231 Grand Street<sup>5</sup>; and

#### THE NEED FOR SHELTERS IN NEW YORK CITY

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<sup>4</sup> <https://goddard.org/programs/fighting-homelessness/homelessoutreach/>

<sup>5</sup> For more information about regulations concerning sex offenders, view CB2’s report at <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb2/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/10/09-September-2021-Human-Services-Minutes-on-Sex-Offenders.pdf>. Additional information is available through the NY State Senate at <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EXC/A12-B>. The sex offender registry can be accessed at <https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/nsor/>

27. The need for additional homeless shelters in New York City is well-established, with the City currently operating an “Open RFP” program for the establishment of new shelters; and
28. As a right-to-shelter city, NYC’s DSS/DHS is required by law to provide shelter to any individual who seeks it; and
29. The current population in the city’s shelter system is approximately 48,413, including 15,057 children,<sup>6</sup> and a vacancy rate in 2018 of 1.5% vs. a goal of 3%<sup>7</sup>; and
30. Approximately 2,376 additional individuals were living on the city’s streets on January 26, 2021<sup>8</sup>; and

#### CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES IN CHINATOWN DURING AND FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

31. The proposed 231 Grand Street Shelter would be located within both the Chinatown BID and the greater Chinatown community, which has experienced a unique and varied set of challenges in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic; and
32. Such challenges include a significant increase in crime targeting Asian-Americans, with a 361% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes recorded in 2021 in New York City according to the NYPD<sup>9</sup>, and the group Stop AAPI Hate recording over 1,700 hate incidents towards Asian-Americans in the state of New York from March 2020 through December 2021<sup>10</sup>; and
33. The overall increase in crime has included a number of specific horrific and tragic crimes which have recently been committed against Asian-Americans, including the murder of Christina Yuna Lee in her Chinatown apartment on Chrystie Street in February 2022; and
34. These incidents have led to an increased environment of fear amongst residents of Chinatown, with a recent survey indicating that 75% of Asian seniors in New York City

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NYCHomelessShelterPopulationCharts1-2022.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2018/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/hope-2021-results.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/nypd-reports-361-percent-increase-anti-asian-hate-crimes-last-year-rcna8427>

<sup>10</sup> <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/22-SAH-NationalReport-3.1.22-v9.pdf>

are afraid to leave home due to the rise in attacks on Asian-Americans<sup>11</sup> and hundreds of residents lining up on the street in Chinatown for pepper-spray giveaways<sup>12</sup>; and

35. This increase in crime and fears for safety has been accompanied by economic hardship as well, with an increase of 6,000% in Asian-Americans in New York state filing for unemployment at the beginning of the pandemic, more than three times the rate of the general population<sup>13</sup>; and
36. This economic hardship has further led to fears around survival of the Chinatown culture community, highlighted by the closure of iconic establishments such as Jing Fong in 2021, one of 17 restaurants in Chinatown that had already closed permanently by March 2021 as a result of the pandemic<sup>14</sup>; and
37. Augmenting such challenges and hardships faced by Chinatown in the last two years, there is a sense that the concerns of the community have not been adequately addressed by elected officials given that Chinatown straddles multiple Community Districts as well as multiple existing and proposed NY Congressional Districts<sup>15</sup>; and

## OUTPOURING OF OPPOSITION

38. Amid this current environment within Chinatown, the community has expressed unprecedented and sustained opposition to the proposed 231 Grand Street shelter, which is seen by many in the community as an unfair burden to be placed on the Chinatown neighborhood at this time given both the economic and safety-related issues currently facing the community, with this opposition being expressed to CB2 on multiple occasions as outlined below; and
39. CB2's Human Services Committee videoconference on February 24, 2022, was attended by over 200 people, with comments heard from over 20 attendees plus scores of comments in the Chat section of the Zoom meeting; and
40. CB2's Full Board videoconference on March 24, 2022, was attended by over 400 people, with comments heard from 65 people, including elementary school students, residents,

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.amny.com/news/asian-seniors-terrified-to-leave-homes-amidst-hate-crime-spate-study-finds/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/chinatown-free-pepper-spray/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/05/new-york-chinatown-11-september-covid-19-crisis>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/10/nyregion/chinatown-restaurant-closures-coronavirus.html>

<sup>15</sup> [https://newyork.redistrictingandyou.org/?districtType=cd&propA=current\\_2012&propB=congress\\_latfor\\_20220202&opacity=2#%26map=13.49/40.72239/-73.98988/30](https://newyork.redistrictingandyou.org/?districtType=cd&propA=current_2012&propB=congress_latfor_20220202&opacity=2#%26map=13.49/40.72239/-73.98988/30)

small business owners, local church leaders in CB2, community constituents and visitors to the Chinatown neighborhood during a four-hour public session, with all comments except two being in opposition to the plan; and

41. The office of CB2 received over 3,600 postcards collected from Susan Lee, a Tribeca resident representing New Yorkers for Downtown Recovery, which were signed by “residents, merchants, patrons and visitors of Chinatown” expressing “outrage” at the proposed shelter; and
42. CB2 additionally received approximately thirty emails in opposition, as well as two emails in support; and
43. The public comments heard and received by CB2 centered on a number of key issues and areas, as further outlined below; and
44. There were personal accounts given by those in attendance that the Chinatown community is saturated with conditions that degrade quality of life, with the public speaking of a “steady deterioration of quality of life” and asking for balance when placing shelters throughout the city; and
45. Other concerns centered around the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and the accompanying heightened fear and anxiety in the neighborhood, as noted in points 32-34 of this resolution, with business owners speaking of closing their businesses early to prevent employees’ having to walk or commute home after sunset, and many commenters expressing their belief in a connection between crime and homelessness and describing encounters with homeless individuals; and
46. Others expressed concerns that a new shelter would add to an already existing issue with drug use and drug dealing, particularly in nearby Sara D. Roosevelt Park; and
47. Others noted concerns around mental illness among the homeless and were worried about increased encounters with mentally ill individuals on the street; and
48. Commenters further noted that they felt that the above Quality-of-Life concerns had been borne out during the time that 231 Grand served as a temporary shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic with instances of harassment and encounters with mentally ill individuals occurring near the shelter during this time; and
49. Others noted concerns that the proposed shelter would contribute to the already difficult economic conditions in Chinatown; and
50. Other commenters specifically pointed to the proposed plans by the City to demolish a pre-existing jail to construct a new borough-based jail in Chinatown, and believed that such a jail would be an undue burden to the community in addition to the proposed shelter; and

51. Many commenters noted that there were already multiple existing shelters in Chinatown, as well as others currently in development, and that although the proposed 231 Grand shelter would be the first shelter open in CB2, there are already “6 shelters in the Chinatown area” and several others proposed; and
52. Many noted the division of Chinatown amongst three community districts (as noted in point 37 of this resolution) and felt the City had applied a “divide and conquer” strategy in order to site new shelters in the Chinatown area, with this feeling of neglect from the City amplified by language barriers that exists with many Chinatown residents; and
53. An overall general concern noted was that the homeless to be housed in the proposed shelter would not be “from the neighborhood” and that the shelter would “bring more homeless into the area” from outside the neighborhood; and
54. The range of concerns culminated with a repeated call for CB2 and elected officials to listen to and respond to the concerns of the community by preventing the proposed shelter from opening at this location; and

#### ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC CONCERNS RAISED BY CB2 MEMBERS

55. In addition to the concerns and issues raised by community members, CB2 members also raised specific concerns relating to the process for siting and evaluating the proposed 231 Grand Shelter, with such concerns being outlined further below; and
56. Comments were made by CB2 members regarding the opacity of the process for developing the Fair Share Analysis, which is not shared with the general public and does not define precisely what a “fair” or “unfair” share is, and the question was raised as to why a “stripped down” version of the Fair Share report could not be provided to the public, especially given the many comments from Chinatown community members stating that the neighborhood was already shouldering its “fair share”; and
57. Further concerns were raised that the Fair Share Analysis does not take into account shelters which are in development but not complete, nor does it take into account facilities in development such as the proposed jail which might impact quality of life, both of which possibly provide a distorted view of the “fair share” given to Chinatown by the City and relevant agencies; and
58. Other concerns were raised over the lack of specific metrics to evaluate the success of the proposed shelter structure (Drop-in Center with Stabilization Beds), given that the facility is the first of its kind, and whether such metrics would include community impact measures such as crime and drug use; and
59. Further concerns were raised that DSS/DHS had not defined when the pilot program would be evaluated by them and what specifically would constitute program success, and whether the facility would be shut or redesigned if unsuccessful; and



60. Concerns were raised over whether the City would definitively close existing hotels currently being used as homeless shelters in Chinatown, which are slated to be closed in 2023; and

61. Many CB2 members expressed recognition of the need to continue building new homeless shelters in NYC but believed that the concerns of the Chinatown community were valid and that CB2 should lend its voice in order to amplify the voices of Chinatown, which have seemingly been unheard by the City and relevant agencies.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that Community Board 2, Manhattan (CB2) recognizes both the legal obligation of New York City and the urgent need to provide shelter and services to the unhoused, as well as recognizes the positive work historically performed by Housing Works, but believes that in certain cases, **serious concerns** around equity and safety must be addressed before deciding to move forward with a specific site; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that in the case of the proposed shelter at 231 Grand Street, CB2 has **serious concerns** around the impact of COVID-19 and other factors in recent years on the Chinatown community, as well as a seeming lack of sufficient engagement between City officials and the Chinatown community; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that given these **serious concerns**, Community Board 2, Manhattan, **demands** the following actions be undertaken prior to the consideration of any other shelters within the Chinatown community, including the proposed shelter at 231 Grand Street; and

#### FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS

1. Analysis of facilities in development and extinction, in addition to shelters and other facilities currently in operation; and
2. Analysis of the impact of different types of facilities beyond shelters which are likely to have an impact on quality of life in Chinatown, such the new planned “mega jail” on White Street; and
3. A definition of “fair” concentration vs. over-saturation.

#### PROGRAM EVALUATION

4. NYC Department of Social Services and Homeless Services (DSS/DHS) must provide **written commitment** to the date when the shelter at 231 Grand Street, presented to CB2 as a pilot program, as well as any other proposed shelter, will undergo **program evaluation**; and
5. DSS/DHS must provide **written commitment** to the metrics that will be measured, and **include among those** impacts to the community, including crime, noise, trash, visible drug use, and other negative factors.

#### WIND-DOWN OF EXISTING HOTEL SHELTERS

6. DSS/DHS provide **written commitment** that the hotels within Chinatown currently serving as shelters will be closed by the end of 2023, as outlined in the DeBlasio administration's "Turning the Tide on Homelessness" and prior to the consideration of any new shelters in Chinatown.

**RECOGNITION OF AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CHINATOWN COMMUNITY**

7. Elected Officials including the Mayor's office and NYC agencies – including NYPD, DOT, DPR, DSNY, Small Business Services and more - acknowledge the deep impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors on the Chinatown community, including increased hate crimes towards Asian-Americans and violence, crime and fears for personal safety, economic hardship, and a decline in the quality of life for many Chinatown residents; and that these entities make a deep and good faith effort to engage with the Chinatown community regarding issues of representation, safety, equity and Quality of Life. This should include safety and Quality of Life concerns regarding any of the identified shelters within Chinatown.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that, given that the City has not yet made extensive general engagement or specific engagement on the topics identified above, Community Board 2 believes that the City **should not move forward** with the current proposed 231 Grand Street shelter consisting of a Drop-in Center and Stabilization Beds at this time.

**Vote:** PASSED: 37 Board Members in favor; 7 Board Members opposed (S. Aaron, C. Dignes, W. Kawadler, R. Kessler, J. Liff, M. Osman, A. Zeldin)

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Jeannine Kiely, Chair  
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Susanna Aaron, Chair  
Human Services Committee  
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JK/BG

- c:
- Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
  - Hon. Carolyn Maloney, Congresswoman
  - Hon. Nydia Velazquez, Congresswoman
  - Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senator
  - Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
  - Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NYS Assembly Member
  - Hon. Yuh-Lin Niou, NYS Assembly Member

Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member  
Hon. Christopher Marte, NYC Council Member  
Hon. Carlina Rivera, NYC Council Member  
Charles King, Housing Works, Chief Executive Officer