



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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LOWELL D. KERN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

November 19, 2021

Steve Banks
Commissioner
Department of Homeless Services
150 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10007

**Re: 771 Ninth Avenue – Proposed Drop - In Center
By Department of Homeless Services & Urban Pathways**

Dear Commissioner Banks,

The Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee (HHHS) of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) was briefed on October 21, 2021, about the proposed Drop-in Center by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and Urban Pathways, a not-for-profit social service provider partner.

In a letter dated August 20th, 2021 (Appendix D), DHS informed MCB4 of a proposed Drop-In Center at 771 9th Avenue, between West 51st and West 52nd Streets, with 85 chairs, to provide low-barrier services for homeless individuals, with a projected opening in late 2021.

MCB4 at its regularly scheduled Full Board meeting on October 29th, 2021, voted by a vote of 35 in favor, 5 opposed, 5 abstaining and 0 present not eligible, **to approve the siting of this Proposed Drop-in Center in Manhattan Community District 4 (MCD4), but not at this location, due to the high density of social services in the immediate surrounding blocks.** MCB4 is not opposed to such a social service facility in MCD4. DHS and Urban Pathways must work with MCB4 to determine an alternate site for this Drop-In Center.

Background

High Density of Social Services in MCD4

MCD4 currently has 23 homeless shelters & social services facilities, for a total of 973 beds, as well as 24 supportive housing developments (60% homeless), for a total of 2,043 beds. MCB4 continues to support the creation of supportive housing. In fact, in the past two years, MCB4 has requested and, in 2020, successfully worked with the developer of the Slaughterhouse Site (495 11th Ave) and the New York City Economic Development

Corporation to add 75 units of supportive housing to this development, with a total of 350 permanently affordable apartments in the development.

High Density of Social Services Surrounding 771 Ninth Avenue

The high density of existing social services in this area is the community's main concern.

There are currently three social service / supportive housing sites near the proposed Drop-in Center, for a total of 302 beds (see map and table in Appendix):

- Stardom Hall, 330-332 W51st St, Lantern Group: 112 beds
- 52nd Street Women's Shelter, 427 W52nd St, Care for the Homeless (CFH): 120 beds
- Alexander Abraham Residence, 341 W51st St, Women in Need (WIN): 70 beds

Siting a Drop-in Center at this specific location would result in a severe oversaturation of services and a cumulative number of 387 beds between West 51st to West 52nd Streets, around a two-block radius of 9th Avenue. In fact, Care for the Homeless, a shelter operator at 427 W52nd Street, was not informed in advance of this proposed Drop-in Center.

The proposed Drop-in Center would lead to an unacceptable increased density of social services in these blocks.

COVID Homeless Hotel Relocations

Similarly, and without much consideration, between May and June of 2020, DHS relocated 2,142 shelter beds for single individuals, many of whom suffer from mental illness, alcohol, and chemical addiction to Manhattan Community District 4. Due to poor communication and poor management by some providers, as well as decreased social services, DHS contributed to a public safety crisis affecting multiple communities.

Proposed Drop-in Center & Operator

The proposed Drop-in Center would be funded by the Department of Homeless Services. The project is for single adults with 85 chairs for homeless individuals. The center would provide basic services including bathrooms, showers, meals, clothing, laundry, case management, and housing search assistance. It would also provide social service support, including medical, mental health, and rehabilitation services. The proposal includes an entrance located on 9th Avenue, 4 floors, 2 floors for clients and 2 floors for 33 full-time employees. There would be a case manager for every client and staff would be present on-site 24/7 every day.

Urban Pathways provides a full continuum of care to homeless and at-risk single adults throughout New York City, that includes both street solutions and affordable housing with services. Each year Urban Pathways serves 3,900 New Yorkers in need, with approximately half of clients receiving comprehensive services.

Committee & Public Discussion

DHS stated that there was a great need for homeless services in the area, and community members responded that the need for homeless services had to be balanced against other community needs, such as supporting the 9th Avenue Main Street, which has been so heavily impacted by store closures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There were 11 Committee members and 28 members of the public at the meeting, 6 of whom spoke on this matter. Overwhelmingly, the Committee approved and endorsed the concept of a drop-in center on its merits, however, the majority of the Committee

opposed this proposed site, specifically, due to the concentration of social services in surrounding blocks, each with several issues, and its location on 9th Avenue, the commercial Main Street of Hell's Kitchen.

A Committee member noted that Urban Pathways formerly operated a drop-in center, known as the Open Door, on West 41st Street and 9th Avenue, in a Port Authority location. That facility was poorly managed and caused serious issues in the surrounding blocks of the neighborhood.

Since May of 2020, hundreds of community members have attended the Housing, Health & Human Services Committee meetings and have raised serious concerns about public safety, directly related to the poor management and lack of social services at several of the temporary shelter hotels. A majority of the complaints were *directly* related to the oversaturation of temporary shelter hotels in a one-block radius. Given this history of oversaturation, it is critical that DHS seek input from MCD4 before siting any homeless service facilities.

Members of the Committee have been welcoming to social services as long as they have been well-sited and well-operated. Members of the public spoke, including members of the West 55th St Block Association, West 47th/48th Streets Block Association, and local tenant associations. Again, the overwhelming majority did not oppose a drop-in center, but not at this location. Members of the public noted that the proposed location is not only adjacent to other social service facilities, but also to the Upper School of The Blessed Sacrament, both on West 52nd Street between 9th and 10th Avenues, Manhattan High School on West 52nd Street between 8th and 9th Avenues, and P.S. 111 and City Knoll Middle School on West 53rd Street between 9th and 10th Avenues.

Public Process – Site & Operator Selection

Instead of acting in an rushed manner, DHS must return to a collaborative process with the community and the Community Board regarding both site and operator selection for proposed social service facilities. By meeting and briefing the Board in a transparent matter, MCB4 will be able to assist in site selection for proposed social service facilities that do not create an undue concentration of social service facilities. Further, it will bring local knowledge to assure that such proposed facilities will have community support in advance. It has been the Board's experience that sensitively sited facilities can be welcomed and integrated into the community. With this experience, the Board will develop siting criteria and a questionnaire for operators so there can be a community vetting of both site and operators in collaboration with DHS. In that process, both the Community Board and local community stakeholders must be involved in the process.

Conclusion

MCB4 approves the siting of this proposed Drop-in Center in MCD4, but not at this location, due to the high density of social services in the immediate surrounding blocks. MCB4 is not opposed to such a social service facility in MCD4. Instead, MCB4 requests DHS and Urban Pathways to work with MCB4 and the community to determine an

alternate site for this Drop-in Center in MCD4¹, that will not create an oversaturation of social services in a two-block radius.

MCB4 appreciates DHS's ongoing collaboration in terms of the social service facility Community Advisory Board meetings, briefings, and appearances at the HHHS Committee meeting to discuss and respond to the community's concerns. However, it is critical that there be transparency and real engagement with MCB4 prior to the siting of proposed social service facilities, such as a drop-in center. It is necessary that we remain part of the process to maintain the stability of our existing residential neighborhoods. We look forward to working with you to find an alternate site for a proposed Drop-in Center.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4



Maria Ortiz
Co-Chair
Housing, Health
Human Services Committee



Joe Restuccia,
Co-Chair
Housing, Health
Human Services Committee

- cc: Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, New York City Council
Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congree
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Robert Jackson, New York State Senate
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal, New York State Assembly

¹ Or in MCD5, closer to mass transit.



**Department of
Social Services**

Human Resources
Administration

Department of
Homeless Services

Steven Banks
Commissioner

150 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10007

929 221 7315

August 20, 2021

Jesse Bodine
District Manager, Community Board 4
424 West 33rd Street, Suite 580
New York, NY 10001

Dear Mr. Bodine:

I am writing to provide you with notification regarding the planned opening of the following program:

Drop-In Center: 771 Ninth Avenue, Manhattan, NY

- Capacity/population: **85 chairs**
- Nonprofit service provider: **Urban Pathways**
- Anticipated opening: **Winter/Late 2021**

In 2016, the City launched HOME-STAT, the most comprehensive homeless outreach program in the nation, as part of our commitment to addressing unsheltered homelessness in New York City. As part of this citywide initiative, experienced outreach teams and not-for-profit service provider partners canvass the five boroughs 24/7/365 to identify and engage individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, encourage them to accept services, and ultimately help them transition off the streets. Since the launch of HOME-STAT, through these efforts and unprecedented new investments, outreach teams have helped more than 4,200 unsheltered New Yorkers come off the streets and subways citywide into transitional programs and permanent housing.

New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness are our most uniquely challenging population to engage, and efforts to aid our unsheltered neighbors require persistent and compassionate outreach, including dedicated services, such as Drop-In Centers, which are tailored to provide basic services for unsheltered New Yorkers.

Drop-In Centers provide basic services such as meals, laundry services, showers and restroom access, along with staff engagement and case management. These settings are often the first step towards helping individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness accept services and transition off the streets. At these lower-barrier programs compassionate staff provide on-site services and work closely with each individual to rebuild trust, stabilize their lives, and encourage further transition from the streets into transitional or permanent housing. These facilities are a vital tool

for outreach teams when engaging unsheltered New Yorkers, providing a minimal engagement option to a population that may not be ready for or may not be best served by more traditional transitional housing settings.

As part of our 24/7/365 outreach efforts, this Administration restored 24/7 hours and services at Drop-in Centers and has continued to develop specialized resources, including Drop-in Centers, for helping unsheltered individuals come off the streets. Through the use of these innovative and vital tools, and in combination with our continued round-the-clock outreach efforts and our substantial expansion of low-barrier beds and services, we've been able to help more than 4,200 unsheltered New Yorkers come off the streets and subways into transitional and permanent housing since the launch of the HOME-STAT initiative.

To that end, in service of these needs, Urban Pathways, our non-profit social service provider partner, is in the process of opening a Drop-In Center at 771 9th Avenue that we anticipate will open in the winter of 2021. This Drop-In Center facility will provide 85 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness with basic services and supports they need and deserve to get back on their feet, including medical, mental health, and rehabilitation services. This location will be able to provide services to individuals in the Hell's Kitchen area and the broader borough of Manhattan.

Working in close coordination with HOME-STAT outreach teams, Urban Pathways will provide these services to help our vulnerable neighbors and fellow New Yorkers come off the streets and subways and regain their footing with dignity. We are confident that these New Yorkers will be warmly welcomed – and through collaborative support and compassion, we will make this the best experience it can be for all.

Urban Pathways will reach out to you shortly to answer any outstanding questions or concerns. We look forward to further discussing this site with you and your constituents.

Thank you for your leadership and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erin Drinkwater", is placed on a light orange rectangular background.

Erin Drinkwater
Deputy Commissioner
Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs

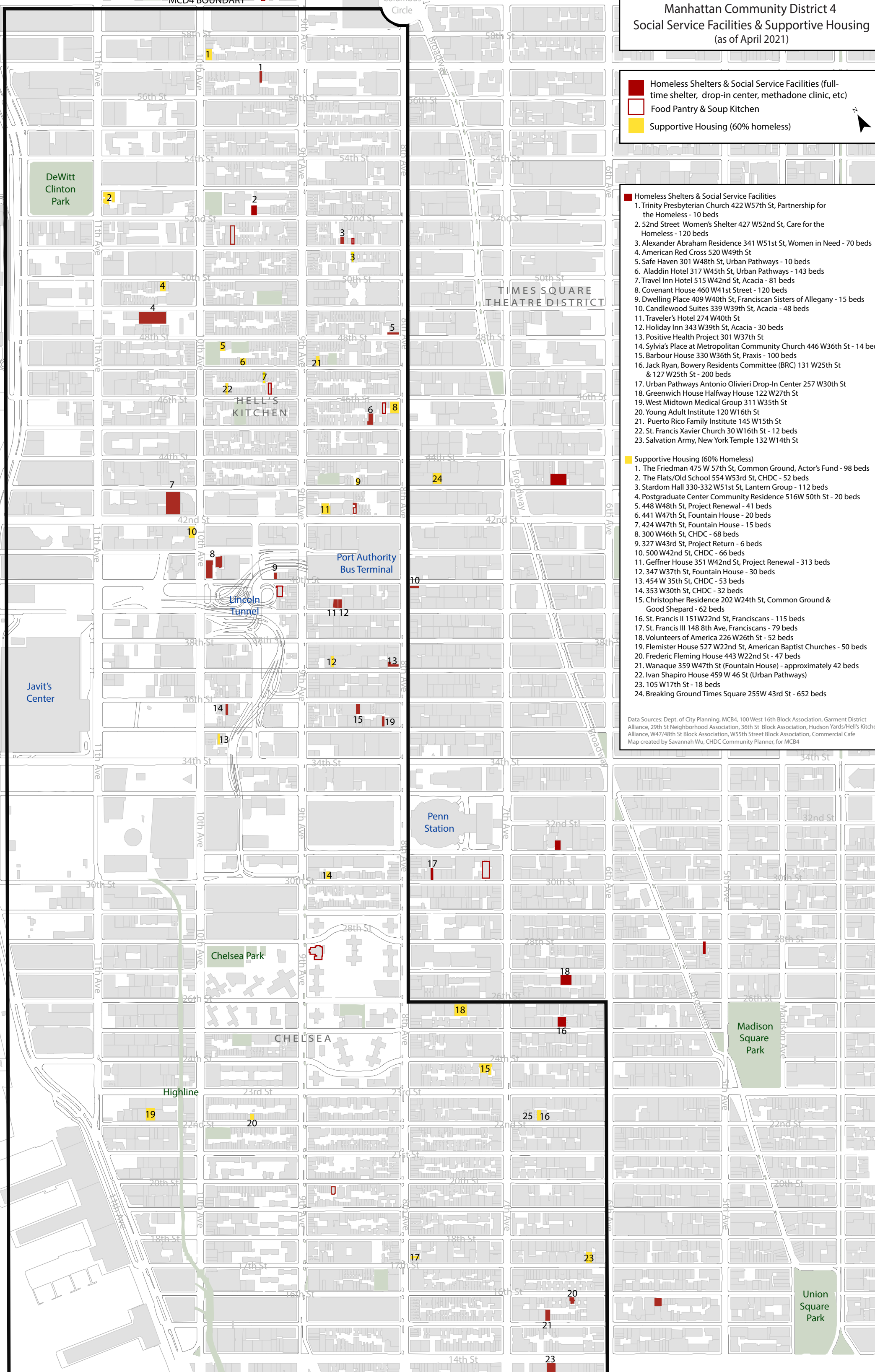
Manhattan Community District 4 Social Service Facilities & Supportive Housing (as of April 2021)

- Homeless Shelters & Social Service Facilities (full-time shelter, drop-in center, methadone clinic, etc)
- Food Pantry & Soup Kitchen
- Supportive Housing (60% homeless)



- Homeless Shelters & Social Service Facilities
 1. Trinity Presbyterian Church 422 W57th St, Partnership for the Homeless - 120 beds
 2. 52nd Street Women's Shelter 427 W52nd St, Care for the Homeless - 120 beds
 3. Alexander Abraham Residence 341 W51st St, Women in Need - 70 beds
 4. American Red Cross 520 W49th St
 5. Safe Haven 301 W48th St, Urban Pathways - 10 beds
 6. Aladdin Hotel 317 W45th St, Urban Pathways - 143 beds
 7. Travel Inn Hotel 515 W42nd St, Acacia - 81 beds
 8. Covenant House 460 W41st Street - 120 beds
 9. Dwelling Place 409 W40th St, Franciscan Sisters of Allegany - 15 beds
 10. Candlewood Suites 339 W39th St, Acacia - 48 beds
 11. Traveler's Hotel 274 W40th St
 12. Holiday Inn 343 W39th St, Acacia - 30 beds
 13. Positive Health Project 301 W37th St
 14. Sylvia's Place at Metropolitan Community Church 446 W36th St - 14 beds
 15. Barbour House 330 W36th St, Praxis - 100 beds
 16. Jack Ryan, Bowery Residents Committee (BRC) 131 W25th St & 127 W25th St - 200 beds
 17. Urban Pathways Antonio Olivieri Drop-In Center 257 W30th St
 18. Greenwich House Halfway House 122 W27th St
 19. West Midtown Medical Group 311 W35th St
 20. Young Adult Institute 120 W16th St
 21. Puerto Rico Family Institute 145 W15th St
 22. St. Francis Xavier Church 30 W16th St - 12 beds
 23. Salvation Army, New York Temple 132 W14th St
- Supportive Housing (60% Homeless)
 1. The Friedman 475 W 57th St, Common Ground, Actor's Fund - 98 beds
 2. The Flats/Old School 554 W53rd St, CHDC - 52 beds
 3. Stardom Hall 330-332 W51st St, Lantern Group - 112 beds
 4. Postgraduate Center Community Residence 516W 50th St - 20 beds
 5. 448 W48th St, Project Renewal - 41 beds
 6. 441 W47th St, Fountain House - 20 beds
 7. 424 W47th St, Fountain House - 15 beds
 8. 300 W46th St, CHDC - 68 beds
 9. 327 W43rd St, Project Return - 6 beds
 10. 500 W42nd St, CHDC - 66 beds
 11. Geffner House 351 W42nd St, Project Renewal - 313 beds
 12. 347 W37th St, Fountain House - 30 beds
 13. 454 W 35th St, CHDC - 53 beds
 14. 353 W30th St, CHDC - 32 beds
 15. Christopher Residence 202 W24th St, Common Ground & Good Shepard - 62 beds
 16. St. Francis II 151 W22nd St, Franciscans - 115 beds
 17. St. Francis III 148 8th Ave, Franciscans - 79 beds
 18. Volunteers of America 226 W26th St - 52 beds
 19. Flemister House 527 W22nd St, American Baptist Churches - 50 beds
 20. Frederic Fleming House 443 W22nd St - 47 beds
 21. Wanaque 359 W47th St (Fountain House) - approximately 42 beds
 22. Ivan Shapiro House 459 W 46 St (Urban Pathways)
 23. 105 W17th St - 18 beds
 24. Breaking Ground Times Square 255W 43rd St - 652 beds

Data Sources: Dept. of City Planning, MCB4, 100 West 16th Block Association, Garment District Alliance, 29th St Neighborhood Association, 36th St Block Association, Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen Alliance, W47/48th St Block Association, W55th Street Block Association, Commercial Cafe
Map created by Savannah Wu, CHDC Community Planner, for MCB4



DeWitt Clinton Park

TIMES SQUARE THEATRE DISTRICT

HELL'S KITCHEN

Port Authority Bus Terminal

Lincoln Tunnel

Javit's Center

Penn Station

Chelsea Park

CHELSEA

Highline

Madison Square Park

Union Square Park