

JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

424 West West 33 Street, Suite #580
New York, NY 10001
tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

March 9, 2023

Molly Park
Acting Commissioner
NYC Department of Social Services
150 Greenwich St
New York, NY 10038

**Re: 305 West 39th St
DHS Shelter at Artel Hotel
Asylum Seekers with Adult Children**

Dear Commissioner Jenkins,

On January 19th, 2022, the NYC Department of Homeless Services presented the use of 305 West 39th Street, the Artel Hotel as a shelter for asylum seekers with adult family members to Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Housing, Health, & Human Services Committee. Committee members reviewed and discussed the siting process and community concerns at the public meeting.

At its regularly scheduled Full Board meeting on March 1st, 2023, MCB4 voted 36 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote to request that the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) continue to engage with MCB4 on issues surrounding the temporary shelter for asylum seekers at 305 West 39th Street and respond to the community's concerns and requests summarized below.

Background

There are currently 77 active DHS shelter sites for asylum seekers that have been opened since May 2022, with three DHS shelter sites located in Manhattan Community District 4 (MCD4).

There are currently a total of six Humanitarian Emergency Resource Center (HERC) shelter sites for asylum seekers in or adjacent to MCD4, with approximately 2,143 beds (in MCD4: Watson Hotel, 440 West 57th Street; Skyline Hotel, 725 10th Ave; Washington Jefferson Hotel, 318 West 51st Street; Econo Lodge, 300 West 47th Street; and Artel Hotel, 305 West 39th Street; in MCD5: Row Hotel, 700 8th Ave; Paramount Hotel, 235 West 46th Street; and Stewart Hotel, 371 7th Avenue and see Appendix for map).

The Artel Hotel will have 73 units for families with adults over 18 years old. MCB4 received notification on January 17th, 2023, and the families moved in the following day on January 18th, 2023. Currently, there is no social services provider. Consequently, DHS itself is providing social services. In the future, the service provider will be HOGAR¹, a not-for-profit organization based in the Bronx. In this budget hotel, there is no dining room or other space to provide services or meals. Therefore, each day, DHS food vendors will deliver three prepared meals. DHS is also directly providing security both inside and outside the facility and perimeter checks.

Community Concerns & Requests

- **Concentration of High Need Social Service Residents**

Concentrating a high need social service population in a 22-block radius is not a strategy for success, either for the clients or the community².

In MCD4, in Hell's Kitchen in a 22-block radius (West 35th Street to West 57th Street) there are currently 29 homeless shelter sites with 2,039 shelter beds with approximately 2,439 individuals, leased by either DHS or Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) in the West 30s, West 40s, and West 50s (see map in Appendix).

In addition, in that same 22-block radius there are 15 supportive housing developments with 983 units.

- **Public Safety Concerns for this location**

Currently, out of 77 New York City Police precincts, Midtown South Precinct (MTS) has the highest rate of felonies and narcotics arrests citywide.

Many of those arrests have taken place in the 8th Avenue corridor from West 34th to West 45th Streets. Heroin sales are centered to the south from West 34th to West 38th, while crack sales predominate from West 39th to West 45th. One block south of the Port Authority Bus Terminal, 305 West 39th is right in the middle of this active drug market. The serious crime and lack of public safety in this corridor has necessitated a NYPD mobile command center on 8th Avenue

¹ Housing Options and Geriatric Association Resources Inc.

² An argument can be made that by oversaturating Hell's Kitchen with under-resourced communities, the City is placing an additional strain on the services that our existing high needs populations require. Additionally, concentrated poverty is directly linked to important outcomes such as, "crime and delinquency, education, psychological distress, and various health problems, among many other issues, are affected by neighborhood characteristics." Source: [Understanding Neighborhood Effects of Concentrated Poverty, HUD User Office of Policy Development & Research.](#)

and West 38th along with NYPD pole mounted flood lights along 8th Avenue in the West 30s and 40s.

Given this shelter location, MCB4 requests additional security both in and around the perimeter of the block to ensure the safety of asylum seekers totally unfamiliar with the City. MCB4 also requests DHS staff to attend the MTS Precinct Community Council meetings to keep themselves informed of community concerns and NYPD enforcement updates.

- **Lack of an Experienced Social Service Provider**

MCB4 requests DHS to provide details about additional, on-going support it will put in place to ensure that HOGAR can meet the social service needs of the Artel Hotel residents.

The social services provider HOGAR has only operated in smaller buildings in residential neighborhoods in the Bronx. When members of MCB4 viewed their website, it was not fully functioning, nor built out, and it had multiple broken links. Additionally, the location maps linked to Paris, France, and many pages in placeholder were in Latin. In the past few weeks, it has somewhat improved, but offers no information regarding staff or staff qualifications, exact number of units at locations, or number of program staff.

DHS noted in the public meeting that it is working weekly with HOGAR to complete its application to manage and provide social services at 305 West 39th Street. MCB4 notes, given the challenges with this location, a seasoned provider would be highly preferable. For DHS to work with an inexperienced provider, which has difficulty completing basic application paperwork, seems a poor choice for success.

In addition, to best support this shelter, we request that HOGAR complete [MCB4's social service checklist](#) and plan to attend an upcoming HHHS meeting to review the responses.

- **Community Advisory Board**

MCB4 requests DHS to commit to creating a Community Advisory Board to ensure that the site, irrespective of provider, is well integrated into the community, and that community concerns are addressed.

- **Lack of and Future Planning for Shelter Siting**

After months of requests that DHS advise and consult with MCB4 in advance of siting shelters, DHS continues to locate shelters in Hell's Kitchen without any planning process. DHS has told the Board, month after month, "We hear you; we understand your concerns regarding the greatly increased number of shelter beds. We are taking those concerns very seriously." And the following month, another shelter is sited in MCD4, usually on a late Friday afternoon. These actions are then explained as part of the homeless or asylum seeker emergency. The Board notes, even in emergencies and constantly changing situations, some planning and certainly communication with other city agencies, namely MCB4 is both desirable and expected.

The ongoing lack of timely information, lack of timely response and lack of inclusion and transparency in the siting processes has seriously undermined our community's trust in DHS and Mayor Adams' administration. MCB4, even while managing solid working relationships with DHS staff, simply can no longer rely on information provided by the Agency to be truthful or accurate.

Manhattan Community District 4 is not in opposition to the planned and appropriate siting of shelters in Community District 4 but cannot support the clustering of a large number of facilities in a several-block radius. To address this lack of planning, MCB4 requests DHS, and other relevant city agencies as needed, engage in a process to identify shelter sites within MCD4 that it may be considering, so that DHS and other social services operators can benefit from local knowledge on surrounding context and conditions.

In addition to engaging in a proactive planning process, MCB4 requests that City Hall and its agencies review the RFP process for the siting of shelters and social services to include community input at the beginning of the siting process.

Asylum Seeker Crisis & Temporary Shelters

Manhattan Community Board 4 continues to support and encourage DHS and the Mayor's Office in its efforts to accommodate asylum seekers. Many of our neighbors and Board Members have volunteered to meet and assist asylum seekers arriving from the southern border at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Our elected officials, notably Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, ran clothing and supply drives for diapers and baby formula to be delivered to temporary asylum seeker shelters in our district. Manhattan Community Board 4, in partnership with Metro Baptist Church on West 40th Street, ran a coat and winter clothing drive for the same population.

The concerns laid out in this letter and frustrations with DHS do undercut that sentiment.

As noted above, neither community members, nor the Community Board, nor local elected officials were notified days in advance of the siting of such facilities. Again, when sites are being opened under emergency orders, we ask that we be notified before a site is opened, even if the advance notice that is possible is only two or three days. Simply put, we are asking that DHS notify a fellow city agency (MCB4) as soon as it starts making the arrangements to move residents into an emergency site.

Lastly, please provide the number of sites, rooms and capacity for asylum seekers by Borough and Community District throughout the City.

Manhattan Community Board, a City Agency

MCB4, like the Department of Social Services, is a New York City agency, with Charter defined roles. To operate effectively, MCB4 should serve as both a conduit of public information to the public and generator of community issues and concerns to City agencies to notify them of neighborhood context, history and background to inform their decision making. With local information, New York City programs can better integrate and succeed in neighborhoods, and that integration is especially critical for programs serving the homeless, whether service- or residential-based. It is critical for the City to notify the Community Board early on before social service providers and shelters move into the community so that it can be ready to answer any questions and to help manage the process.

Manhattan Community Board 4 has appreciated DHS and the City's partnership in the past, but the key aspect of listening to the community has been removed from DHS's philosophy. Shelters and social services are not successful without the thoughtful input, support, and partnership between agencies and the community. That factor in the siting process must return to ensure the success of facilities and shelters. Without community input, the ensuing result has been a clustering of social services and homeless shelters on multiple blocks, creating unintended consequences and compromising public safety.

Furthermore, DHS must work with other City agencies to more evenly distribute social service facilities and shelters throughout the five boroughs to prevent concentration in any one neighborhood.

Conclusion

To ensure the success of social service facilities and shelters, they must be sited thoughtfully and carefully, with facilities distributed more evenly among neighborhoods and community districts. MCB4 asks that City Hall and the Department of Homeless Services engage in a proactive planning process for siting social services facilities.

Responding to community notifications after decisions have already been made about locations and providers does little to address ongoing community concerns. That lack of such discussion and input in advance has turned our hospitable community away from its welcoming approach for proposed new social service facilities.

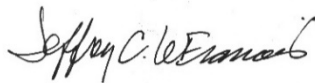
However, social service facilities, when planned in appropriate and thoughtful locations, with community input, are welcomed and encouraged. The most recent proposed social service facility in in MCD4 is Bayview Chelsea (550 West 20th Street), the newest reuse of a historic YMCA building into Supportive Housing for homeless individuals Supervised Housing for

homeless mentally ill and a Community Center.³ After full public discussion, review and debate, the proposal was supported unanimously by the MCB4 on February 1st, 2023.

MCB4 asks DHS to respond to the community concerns and requests as raised by and in response to the opening of the Artel Hotel Shelter at 305 West 39th, as noted above.

The Board looks forward to rebuilding trust and cooperation with DHS.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFrancois
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Joe Restuccia
Co-chair
Housing Health & Human Services
Committee



Maria Ortiz
Co-chair
Housing Health & Human Services
Committee

cc:

Zachary Iscol, Commissioner, Office of Emergency Management

Mitchell Katz, President, NYC Health & Hospitals Corporation

Eric Adam, Mayor

Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

Erik Bottcher, City Councilmember

Gale Brewer, City Councilmember

Jerry Nadler, Congressman

Brad Hoylman, NYS State Senator

Linda B. Rosenthal, NYS Assemblymember

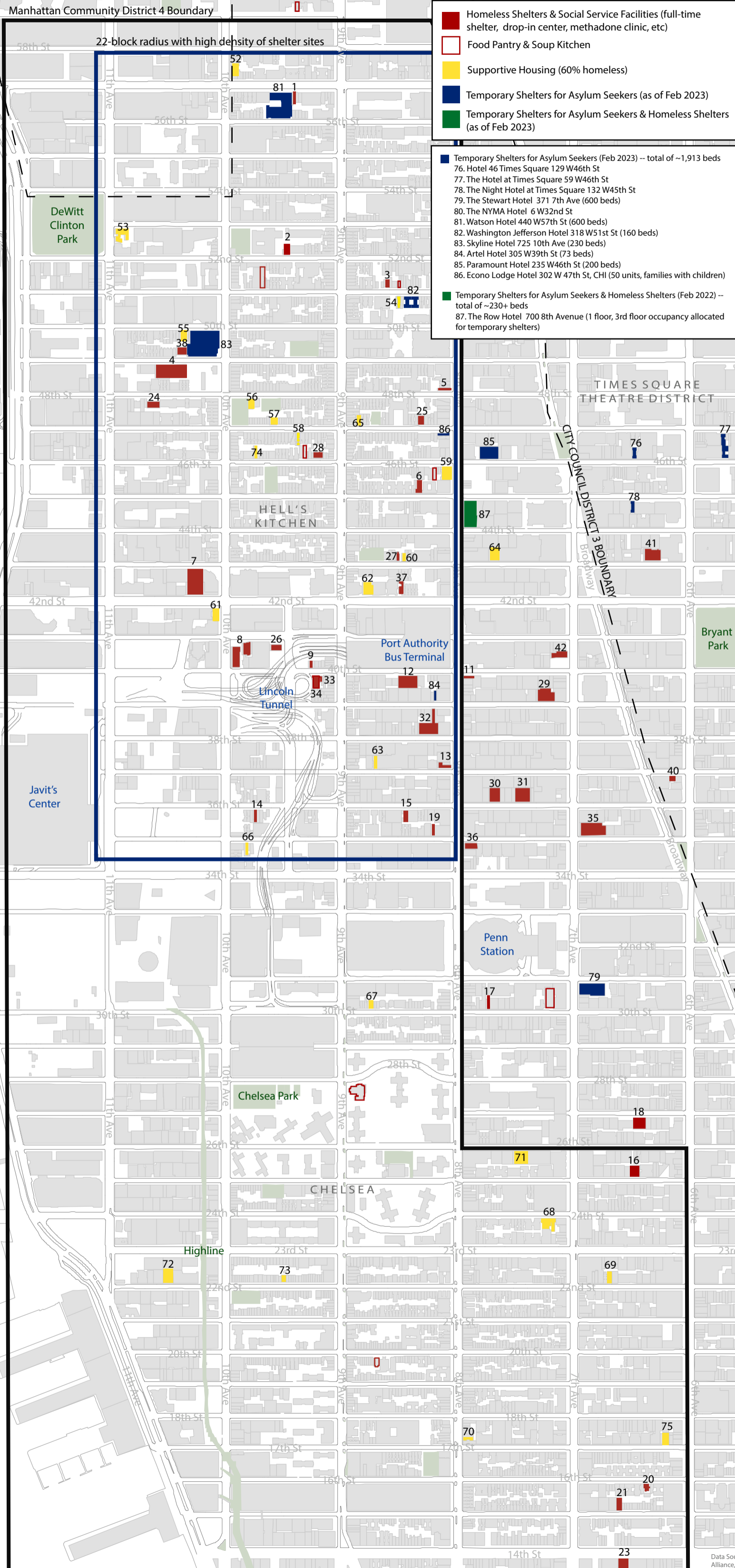
Tony Simone, NYS Assemblymember

³ [MCB4 CLU & HHHS Joint Letter to ESD re Chelsea Bayview Building at 550 West 20th Street RFP, February 2023](#)

Appendix

A. West Midtown, Clinton/Hell's Kitchen & NoMad Temporary Shelters for Asylum Seekers,
Social Service Facilities & Supportive Housing (as of February 2023)

West Midtown, Clinton/ Hell's Kitchen & NoMad Temporary Shelters for Asylum Seekers, Social Service Facilities & Supportive Housing (as of February 2023)



- Homeless Shelters & Social Service Facilities (full-time shelter, drop-in center, methadone clinic, etc)
 - Food Pantry & Soup Kitchen
 - Supportive Housing (60% homeless)
 - Temporary Shelters for Asylum Seekers (as of Feb 2023)
 - Temporary Shelters for Asylum Seekers & Homeless Shelters (as of Feb 2023)
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- Temporary Shelters for Asylum Seekers (Feb 2023) -- total of ~1,913 beds
 - 76. Hotel 46 Times Square 129 W46th St
 - 77. The Hotel at Times Square 59 W46th St
 - 78. The Night Hotel at Times Square 132 W45th St
 - 79. The Stewart Hotel 371 7th Ave (600 beds)
 - 80. The NYMA Hotel 6 W32nd St
 - 81. Watson Hotel 440 W57th St (600 beds)
 - 82. Washington Jefferson Hotel 318 W51st St (160 beds)
 - 83. Skyline Hotel 725 10th Ave (230 beds)
 - 84. Artel Hotel 305 W39th St (73 beds)
 - 85. Paramount Hotel 235 W46th St (200 beds)
 - 86. Econo Lodge Hotel 302 W 47th St, CHI (50 units, families with children)
 - Temporary Shelters for Asylum Seekers & Homeless Shelters (Feb 2022) -- total of ~230+ beds
 - 87. The Row Hotel 700 8th Avenue (1 floor, 3rd floor occupancy allocated for temporary shelters)

- Homeless Shelters & Social Service Facilities -- total of ~2,917+ beds
 - 1. Trinity Presbyterian Church 422 W57th St, Partnership for the Homeless - 10 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. Long Acre Hotel 317 W45th St, CUCS/Urban Pathways - 160 beds
 - 7. Travel Inn Hotel 515 W42nd St, Acacia - 81 beds
 - 8. Covenant House 460 W41st St - 120 beds
 - 9. Dwelling Place 409 W40th St, Franciscan Sisters of Allegany - 15 beds
 - 10. Main Chance 120 E32nd St - estimate of 250-300 men served a day
 - 11. Traveler's Hotel 274 W40th St - 36 beds
 - 12. NY State Parole Board 314 W40th St
 - 13. Housing Works / 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 Shelter 30 W16th St - 12 beds
 - 23. Salvation Army, New York Temple 132 W14th St
 - 24. Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center 535 W48th St
 - 25. Salvation Army Center 315 W47th St
 - 26. DHS Family Shelter 440 W41st St, Westhab - 97 families
 - 27. 43rd St Veterans Program (Rehab Center), 327 W43rd St Samaritan Daytop Village - 48 beds
 - 28. Hartley House 413 W46th St
 - 29. Happy Times Rehab Program 205 W39th St
 - 30. Addiction Care Interventions Addiction Treatment Center 255 W36th St
 - 31. New Life Rehab Center 229 W36th St
 - 32. Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC, AIDS services) and Housing Services United - 307 W38th St
 - 33. Damayan Migrant Workers Association (services for labor trafficking survivors) 406 W40th St
 - 34. New Alternatives 410 W40th St
 - 35. Services for the Underserved 463 Seventh Ave
 - 36. Lantern Community Services 494 8th Ave
 - 37. Project Find Coffee House, Holy Cross Church, 329 W42nd St
 - 38. Homes for the Homeless 519 W49th St - 81 beds
 - 39. Marcell Hotel E23 Stand 3rd Ave (outside map boundaries)
 - 40. TCI 1364 Broadway
 - 41. Woodstock Hotel 127 W43rd St - 283 beds
 - 42. Shiloh 566 Seventh Ave
 - 43. Clarion Hotel 429 Park Ave South - estimate of 120 men served
 - 44. Parallax Center 145 E32nd St - outpatient detox and addiction center
 - 45. Latham Hotel 4 E28th St - for homeless moms, estimate of 175 beds
 - 46. Harmonia 12 W31st St - estimate of 150 people
 - 47. Care for the Homeless 30 E33rd St
 - 48. Mave Hotel 62 Madison Ave
 - 49. The Prince George 14 E28th St - 415 beds for formerly homeless men
 - 50. St Francis 125 E24th St - 300 beds for severely mentally ill homeless men
 - 51. Hotel 31, 120 E31st St - takes city vouchers for the homeless
- Supportive Housing (60% Homeless) -- total of ~2,090 + beds
 - 52. The Friedman 475 W 57th St, Common Ground, Actor's Fund - 98 beds
 - 53. The Flats/Old School 554 W53rd St, CHDC - 52 beds
 - 54. Stardom Hall 330-332 W51st St, Lantern Group - 112 beds
 - 55. Postgraduate Center Community Residence 516W 50th St - 20 beds
 - 56. 448 W48th St, Project Renewal - 41 beds
 - 57. 441 W47th St, Fountain House - 20 beds
 - 58. 424 W47th St, Fountain House - 15 beds
 - 59. 300 W46th St, CHDC - 68 beds
 - 60. 327 W43rd St, Project Return - 6 beds
 - 61. 500 W42nd St, CHDC - 66 beds
 - 62. Geffner House 351 W42nd St, Project Renewal - 313 beds
 - 63. 347 W37th St, Fountain House - 30 beds
 - 64. Breaking Ground Times Square 255 W43rd St - 652 beds
 - 65. Wanaque 359 W47th St, Fountain House - 42 beds
 - 66. 454 W35th St, CHDC - 53 beds
 - 67. 353 W30th St, CHDC - 32 beds
 - 68. Christopher Residence 202 W24th St, Common Ground & Good Shepard - 62 beds
 - 69. St. Francis II 151 W22nd St, Franciscans - 115 beds
 - 70. St. Francis III 148 8th Ave, Franciscans - 79 beds
 - 71. Volunteers of America 226 W26th St - 52 beds
 - 72. Flemister House 527 W22nd St, American Baptist Churches - 50 beds
 - 73. Frederic Fleming House 443 W22nd St - 47 beds
 - 74. Ivan Shapiro House 459 W46 St, Urban Pathways - 47 beds
 - 75. 105 W17th St - 18 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