

Housing Committee Meeting re. 5113 2nd Avenue Permanent Shelter
Meeting Date 3/1/22

Presenters:

- Department of Homeless Services representatives
- Nonprofit Samaritan House representatives

5113 2nd Avenue Permanent Shelter

General

- The nonprofit organization Samaritan House currently operates a shelter on 49th street between 2nd and 3rd Avenue. Samaritan House will also operate the shelter at 5113 2nd Avenue
- 5113 2nd Avenue will be open to 92 single men in a congregate setting, which means that they sleep in dorms with shared bathroom.
 - About 15-16 persons on each floor
 - Full working Kitchen will be available
 - Rooftop outdoor space and indoor recreation space available
- 5113 Second Ave shelter was a former warehouse recently reconstructed. Facility is expecting their next state inspection on March the fifteenth, and if all goes well, anticipate receiving clients by April 1st.
- DHS has a contract with Samaritan village and through that contract Samaritan pays for the costs of operating the shelter, including the rent. So, we have no relationship to the landlord, but the contract does fund the rent.
- Temporary Shelters: Expectation is for temporary/ commercial hotel shelters to end by 2023

Staffing:

- 30 staff in total Samaritan Day Top village staff direct.
 - 50% are operation staff
 - 50% will be social services staff (including a registered nurse board and a part-time psychiatrist), case management services will be included as well as on-site workshops with topics such as medication management.
 - One nurse will be assigned to the site 5 days a week schedule. The site will also have one part-time psychiatrist. In most cases those staff work in the evenings when the men are more available after dinner and back at the site.
 - This location is a behavioral health site. Of note: a trauma-informed care evidence-based practice approach will be employed. Samaritan House has outpatient clinics in each borough, so for those individuals that need extra services they can be referred internally and of course can be connected with the local hospital as needed.

Security

- Facility will have both internal and external contracted security which will be on site around the clock. Security will be doing perimeter runs hourly. Facility will also have security cameras, an X-ray machine and metal detector installed. Shelter has relationship with the 72nd precinct

Community Action Board Meetings

- Samaritan House Community Action Board Meetings to discuss issues and concerns re. 49th street btwn 2nd+ 3rd ave shelter and the 5113 Second Ave. Meetings will be held virtually for the time being. If community would like to have separate CAB meetings for each site, this can be accommodated as well. Plans to have community members visit the sites. Community members raised concerns that CAB meetings have not been held in 2 years. Samaritan House confirmed that a meeting would be scheduled soon and explained that they had trouble coordinating virtual meetings during the pandemic.
- Next Community Action Board meeting will be held on March 29th.

DHS Intake Process

- Everybody accesses the DHS system through the intake center on 13th Street, in Manhattan they go through a basic intake process there and then are assigned to shelter at the assessment where they stay for 2 or 3 weeks.
- They go through a much more detailed assessment of needs after (medical needs, physical needs, employment history, education history, etc.) and based on the findings from the assessment process, the person is placed into a program shelter like the one at 51st street and 2nd Ave DHS makes a very deliberate effort to make sure that we are matching people to the services that they need.
- DHS places people as close as possible to their last new address whenever we can. But there are a variety of competing factors, like, making sure that somebody who needs an accessible site is getting an accessible site. However, somebody who needs a particular set of services is matched with the services.

Community Comments

- Meeting translation and expanded language services is needed to accommodate all community residents
- This neighborhood is being inundated with homeless shelters.
- Concerns raised regarding safety in the community. One of the industrial business owners in the area had issues with some residents from the 49th Street shelter breaking into his property on a few occasions.
- Concerns regarding conversion of space away from industrial use, and minimization of loss of industrial property in the industrial business zone.
- Local produce distributor would like to donate produce to the shelter
- Resident would like to ensure community action board meetings are held regularly.
- Comment re. nurse being available only 5 days a week 'people need medication 7 days a week' Response: it all starts with education for the clients about the importance of taking their medication correctly and regularly. We have social workers also that are part of the staff that also help out. Maybe that'll help with the question about the seven-day coverage. And it's helping clients learn compliance
- Question re. operational plan for closing temporary shelter sites. Response: city will begin closures of temporary hotel shelters gradually and the city hopes to open other permanent sites around the city. A site-by-site public schedule is not available as addresses are protected under social service law. But DHS does publish on a monthly basis and shares this information with community boards.
- Question re. use of IBZ for shelter. City response: manufacturing zones are an allowable zoning location for single adult sites. This is considered as a right use.
- Comment: Reach out to City Council Member about preserving IBZ zones for industrial uses. Currently single men's/women's shelters can be built in IBZ zones as of right.
- Question re. change in valuation of the property? Response: Property is bringing in a significantly larger amount of income than it was prior.
- Comment: I have to say I'm very highly disappointed with the way the whole process is being done. As many members before me have stated, it seems like the decision has been made, and which is being told. What's happening, instead of having a voice that was happening.
- Comment to DHS: you're not servicing people from the community.
- Comment: Concerted effort to have open data available making sure shelters are being opened in every community board around the city. Response: you're not going to find the information in open data, but there is at least one site in every single community board. However, the addresses are protected by social service law and not foil-able. There is a general map available that shows community board counts of sites.
- Question: How do you figure out the population? Why, single adult males?
- Response: due to zoning rules we cannot put a families with children's site in a manufacturing zone only the single adults can be placed in manufacturing zones.
- Comment from DHS: We have gotten all the families with children out of commercial hotels. That's something that we worked really hard on that was a public commitment. We stuck to our public commitment. We did that, and we have every intention of doing it with the single adults as well. DHS is legally obligated to provide shelter to any individual who needs it. So, in order to be able to close the hotels, we need some of the purpose, built sites to move people to.
- If there are specific site that you are concerned about, I really strongly encourage you to call 311.
- Comment from Samaritan House: Sobriety is not a condition of keeping your bed. However, there is a 10 o'clock curfew, and if the individual does not make their curfew, it doesn't mean they lose their bed automatically. Samaritan House works with people on getting sober / reduce their drinking. However, if something happens and Samaritan House can't serve the person adequately, there are rare occasions where Samaritan House can request that that client be transferred to another shelter.
- Question: Does the department of Homeless Services engage in any kind of dialogue regarding the need for permanent housing. Response: Absolutely, affordable housing is an incredibly important component. It's incredibly important to DHS because permanent housing is the end goal for every single one of our clients.

- DHS to coordinate a meeting with Samaritan House and a Community Action Board member who raised a number of concerns.
- Comment from DHS: If we have nonprofit providers who are not doing what they need to do, whatever form that takes, we sever our relationship with them. We have done it. We have a number of providers that are no longer doing business with the city. There's nobody who's too big to fail, our goal is always to make conditions better. I am not talking about Samaritan village here, but DHS takes our accountability role very seriously, and when we need to end a relationship with a provider.
- Comment from DHS: I love the idea of converting hotels to primary housing. There are very real technical and building issues around converting hotels to permanent housing and I'm not an architect. There are different building code requirements for hotels then for permanent housing, and to convert one to the other, requires, a lot of construction work.

Next Steps:

- Assemble FAQ document re. 5113 2nd Avenue Shelter and distribute to community in English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese.
- Organize follow up community meeting with DHS and Samaritan House with translation available in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese to discuss 5113 2nd Avenue shelter
- Proposal – work to implement policy where within manufacturing (M-zoned land) by special permit only, homeless shelters (group homes, use group 5 and similar) shall be permitted. Such a special permit shall require full ULURP review.
- Proposal - work to implement performance-based program where a factor keeping nonprofit shelter operators open is based on their response to community concerns.
- Next Community Action Board meeting will be held on March 29th. Meeting details to follow.
- Hotline to call in any real time concerns re. the 5113 2nd Avenue site to be shared.