

Recommendations: Housing the Homeless and preserving the idea of Contextual Design in the Community, by Karen Argenti, January 14, 2010

When the Mayor proposed a citywide housing plan<sup>[1]</sup> for the homeless he identified three types of homeless facilities. (He did it in the *Citywide Statement of Need*<sup>[2]</sup> based on the *Criteria for Location of City Facilities*<sup>[3]</sup> and found in the Citywide Statement of Need 2009-10, dated 2007,<sup>[4]</sup> see attachment A). In response to the Mayor's proposals for housing the homeless population, Community Board 8 should make a statement in their *District Statement of Needs* to reject the proposal for several reasons.<sup>[5]</sup> The enormous scale of the facilities currently proposed, mostly in the outer boroughs, needs to be seriously reconsidered as not enough is known about the long-term affect of these large facilities on host neighborhoods. Until such study, only small 6-8 clustered units should be considered.

Additional guidelines may include:

1. In order to conserve the contextual residential nature of these neighborhoods, siting of any of the three types of homeless facilities should not be within 500 feet of an existing community and/or municipal facility.
2. If the city is going to pay for or reimburse this type of program, the site in question should have a record of being a good neighbor including a proper fence, clean property, abatement from pests, sidewalk in good condition, appropriate snow removal and no dumping on site, etc. This can be ascertained by a review of fines from DOB, DOS, etc.
3. These programs should partner with existing local social services programming, as the Veterans' housing on Kingsbridge Road. It is not adequate to set up an advisory board.
4. As with other new facilities, community facilities need to do no harm – that is if they are going to bring in people who have to park, parking should be available; for every young person, funding should supplement the expansion of the schools; for social services, mental health, or work training programs, funding should be increased in the area.
5. During construction, the local neighborhood should not be disrupted – streets should not be closed off from access; parking should not be reserved overnight for construction; and if there is no staging area on site, they should not be permitted to use the public's parking spaces, but should rent adequate space nearby.
6. Create the Community Board 8's local list of community facilities, group homes, adult homes (etc.) and providing it to the appropriate agencies (DHS, HRA, HPD or OMH) as part of the District Statement of Need. Include number of residents and place each site on a map.

<sup>[1]</sup> *Citywide Statement of Need*<sup>2</sup> is based on the *Criteria for Location of City Facilities*<sup>3</sup> found in the Citywide Statement of Need 2009-10, dated 2007<sup>4</sup>)

<sup>[2]</sup> New York City Charter § 204. **Citywide statement of needs.** a. Each year not later than the fifteenth day of November, the mayor shall submit to the council, borough presidents, borough boards and community boards a citywide statement of needs concerning city facilities prepared in accordance with the criteria established pursuant to section two hundred three. ....

<sup>[3]</sup> New York City Charter § 203. **Criteria for location of city facilities.** .....the mayor, after consulting with each of the borough presidents, shall file with the city planning commission proposed rules establishing criteria for (1) the location of new city facilities and (2) the significant expansion, closing or significant reduction in size or capacity for service delivery of existing facilities. The criteria shall be designed to further the fair distribution among communities of the burdens and benefits associated with city facilities, consistent with community needs for services and efficient and cost effective delivery of services and with due regard for the social and economic impacts of such facilities upon the areas surrounding the sites.

<sup>[4]</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/pub/son\\_09\\_10.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/pub/son_09_10.pdf)

<sup>[5]</sup> The Charter (section 204) identifies that agency Departmental Statement of Needs should reflect the comments made by the community board in the Community District Statement of Needs: "In preparing such departmental statements of needs, **each agency shall review and consider the district needs statements submitted by community boards.**"