



ZION
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Queens Community Board 11
46-21 Little Neck Parkway
Little Neck, NY 11362

February 18, 2021

Dear Mr. Budabin,

The clergy and leadership of Zion Episcopal Church have been closely watching the City's plan to convert the Pride of Judea building on Northern Boulevard into a 72-bed homeless shelter for senior women. Many of our neighbors feel that this change in our community will be a negative one. While we agree that some aspects of the City's policies and priorities on homelessness are problematic, we welcome our new neighbors. We believe that the opportunities and challenges presented by the shelter will be a gain for the Little Neck-Douglaston community.

Many people oppose the shelter because they feel that the building isn't an ideal fit for use as 72-bed residential facility. On this we agree. It is not ideal. A better response to the growing problem of homelessness and the dearth of affordable housing would involve a robust, city-wide, multi-pronged plan addressing inadequate systems for substance abuse and mental health care, criminal justice reform, social services for survivors of domestic violence, and other vast, systemic changes. We look forward to the day when every shelter has been closed because every one of our neighbors has a safe, stable, and affordable place to live, but we also recognize that it is a long road, and the problem of homelessness is *immediate*. A transitional shelter is something our neighbors need *now*. At this exact moment 72 of our fellow citizens are forced to choose between sub-freezing temperatures or shelter far less optimal than what New York City and Samaritan Village have planned for the site.

For the leadership and clergy of Zion Episcopal Church, the choice to welcome our new neighbors and to partner with Samaritan Village to meet their needs is part of our long-standing commitment to our community and our Christian mission. We believe we are being called to do God's work of building fellowship and solidarity with our new neighbors on Northern Boulevard.

In the coming months, Zion will invite members of the community who are concerned about the City's current response to homelessness to organize in order to advocate for better policies, services, and resources for our fellow citizens. We hope that there will be just as much energy for this kind of advocacy as there is for opposing the shelter.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Lindsay Lunnum, Rector
The Rev. Carl Adair, Deacon

Ms. Joanne Martell, Warden
Ms. Marguerite LeBron, Warden

The Vestry: Ms. Sandra Bechan, Ms. Amy Griffin, Mr. John Kolnsberg, Ms. Kay MacDermott,
Mr. Daniel Ott, Ms. Jee Ryu Savoie, Ms. Alexis Soterakis, Mr. Rodney Tria, Mr. William Wolff, III