

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 8, 2020



Statement from Attorney Randy Mastro on Relocation of Homeless Individuals Currently Housed in the Lucerne Hotel

Upper West Side - On behalf of the [West Side Community Organization](#), which I am honored to represent, we appreciate that the City—at our urging—will be immediately taking concrete steps to address the chaos that reached a crisis point over the past several weeks when the City relocated hundreds of homeless individuals into the Lucerne Hotel, many of whom suffered from mental illness, addiction and other serious problems. That the City has disclosed today it will cease using the Lucerne to house this vulnerable population—and that it will be moving *all* of these individuals out of this SRO hotel by the end of this month and into state-accredited shelter facilities with the social services they need on-site—is a huge step forward for all concerned. That the City has further committed to cease using the Hotel [Belleclaire](#) for such housing in the next wave of closures after this one is also a positive development that we have called for. While there is still more work to be done to repair the damage to this neighborhood and to address the many homeless individuals still left adrift at other SRO hotels, we are gratified that the community is being heard and concrete action is being taken to remedy this tragic situation.

When I wrote to the Mayor on August 26 informing him of the urgent need for remedial action, there was a prompt response from his office. We appreciated the opportunity to work with members of his administration to develop commonsense solutions, like ceasing to use the Lucerne as an SRO hotel for the homeless by the end of this month. We intend to continue our constructive dialogue with City officials and to press to end the use of SRO hotels to house homeless adults. It's not right for neighborhoods, it's not right for the homeless, and it's not right for our City. We expect the City to continue to act swiftly and decisively to reverse its recent policy of using SRO hotels in this manner, and we intend to hold the City accountable if it does not.

What has happened today is a testament to community organizing. Three weeks ago, neighbors who were strangers came together to form the [West Side Community Organization](#) in common cause, dedicated to saving their neighborhood and helping their neighbors when the City was failing them. Families, seniors, small business owners, long-time residents, and newcomers united. They were shocked and horrified to see what was happening in broad daylight in their neighborhood, and they wanted to do something about it. Now, three weeks later, they are no longer strangers. And their collective actions have produced positive change. Their voices have been heard. The Mayor listened and, to his credit, did something about it. But they know that there is still more that needs to be done. And they intend to see to it that their voices continue to be heard.

The Upper West Side prides itself on its diversity and has always welcomed those in need. Prior to the City's decision to transfer more than 700 homeless adults previously housed in congregate shelters into three UWS SRO hotels within a 10-block radius, without any prior notice to the community, this neighborhood was already home to many shelters and shelter beds. Indeed, today this neighborhood ranks among the "Top 10" districts in the City (out of 59 total districts) in terms of shelter beds, housing some 1,700 homeless individuals. But as City officials, service providers, and homeless advocates have long acknowledged, SRO hotels are not where we should be housing this vulnerable population, which needs the kind of social services that can only be provided at proper shelters.

All New Yorkers deserve to feel safe on the streets of their neighborhoods. But we as New Yorkers also care about our neighbors, particularly those in need. We are all in this together. So, we should all be concerned about what happened here and make sure it never happens again.

For more information on the West Side Community Organization, visit www.westsideco.org.

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