

Jewish Home Lifecare
120 West 106th Street
New York, NY 10025

www.jewishhome.org



August 19, 2009

Dear Community Members,

Jewish Home Lifecare is committed to serving New York's elders with compassion and innovation to support the way they want to live their lives. What worked 125 years ago, or 20 years ago, or last year does not work now. Society changes, elders change, their needs change and the ways Jewish Home can best support them and their families change.

The Jewish Home Lifecare Manhattan campus -- parts of it built in the 1880s -- has reached its limit in being able to evolve to provide the care that today's elders need to live in dignity and independence. In a few years, our financial ability to continue repairing and retrofitting the existing buildings to adapt to the changing needs of Manhattan's elderly will be exhausted.

The existing campus must be replaced, or Jewish Home will not be able to continue on the Upper West Side.

Background

For the past several years Jewish Home Lifecare -- a not-for-profit agency of UJA-Federation mainly serving those receiving Medicaid and Medicare assistance -- has been working to create a plan to replace our existing Manhattan campus with a facility that is both financially viable and supportive of the way elders need and want to be served. Elders today demand and deserve more privacy, more independence and the innovative technology that can maximize their quality of life. Working with Perkins Eastman Architects, this will be a cutting edge, urban, household model in partnership with organized labor. Only a new, modern skilled nursing facility can create an environment that achieves community, dignity and choice.

As most of you are aware, our original plan was to sell the eastern portion of the current campus on 106th street. Proceeds from this sale were intended to help finance development of a new eldercare facility on the western portion of the 106th Street site.

In 2007, Jewish Home engaged in a comprehensive dialogue with the community in conjunction with the Upper West Side rezoning, and ultimately secured approval to retain its R72 zoning, subject to height restrictions for both the nursing home and the developer site. Efforts were taken to respond to the goals of the R8A/8B re-zoning. As part of this extensive planning, Jewish Home established a Community Advisory Board (CAB). We engaged in countless discussions with community leaders and elected officials regarding the design of the new facility, with an agreed-upon Charette process, in addition to the CAB. Discussions and negotiations, with Jewish Home paying for the cost of an agreed-upon neutral, delineated a community dispute resolution process to which we would contribute \$50,000. These documents are 95% complete.

In the summer of 2008, the firm Newmark Knight Frank, on behalf of Jewish Home, contacted over 2000 local, regional and national developers, asking for proposals to purchase a portion of the 106th street campus within the framework of the agreements made with the community. 72 developers chose to respond. Discussions followed with six of these over many months. Ultimately, as a result of the financial crisis, only one developer remained with a proposal that would make it possible to create a new Jewish Home on the Upper West Side. This proposal was viable only because the developer did not need to access as much credit – virtually unavailable during this recession – as did other prospective developers, since he had a parcel to swap with our current campus. All of the other developers with whom we had entered into negotiations ultimately withdrew from consideration as the city's and nation's economic situation deteriorated.

Plan for a new Jewish Home in Park West Village

The proposal that met Jewish Home's financial and surety goals came from the Chetrit Group, which proposed that Jewish Home sell our entire 106th campus and construct the new Jewish Home at 100th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues in Park West Village. Following construction, the Chetrit Group would then develop new residential housing on the site of the 106th St. campus. However, Jewish Home insisted on retaining ownership of the Kaufman Building, and will honor all commitments made to the former Stern residents who now live in the building, despite the fact that retaining Kaufman has caused us to absorb a multi-million-dollar obligation. As tenants eventually leave the Kaufman building and the remaining offices move to the 100th Street site, we are committed to retaining it as permanent affordable senior housing.

On August 12, we made the public announcement of our plans to our Community Advisory Board, which is composed of local elected officials and representatives of key neighborhood groups. There was considerable discussion of the plan with a focus on whether Chetrit would be bound by the new area re-zoning or would benefit from the zoning "carve out" that Jewish Home had earlier negotiated for our own community facility use. ***As requested by the CAB, Jewish Home agreed to seek a legal opinion and recommendation from our counsel as to the underlying zoning. We have also requested guidance on how best to transition the 106th Street site to the new R8A/R8B zoning under new ownership.***

Importantly, the Chetrit Group has also acknowledged that they are aware of the importance of this issue to the community and is conducting an expedited review of the implications of R8A/R8B zoning. Both the Jewish Home and Chetrit Group reviews will be completed by Friday, September 11. The Community Board has also asked the City Planning Commission for an independent review of the zoning options, and Councilmember Mark Viverito has asked the City Council's land use and legal staff to explore how R8A/R8B could be established at 106th Street. ***We are supportive of all of these efforts and hope that a legally-binding agreement to proceed under R8A/R8B will be quickly implemented. We also want to make certain, in the event that Jewish Home remains on West 106th Street, that the zoning carve out will remain.***

Benefits of the Park West Village Plan

Available space at Park West Village is for community facility development only, as we understand it. The new Jewish Home campus will bring a number of advantages to the residents of Park West Village.

- ◆ The building would include gardens, cafes, meeting areas and other truly accessible public spaces that would be available to our neighbors in Park West Village
- ◆ The building would be constructed on what is currently an outdoor parking lot. These parking spaces would be replaced, at the same rates, by protected indoor parking just down the block
- ◆ The building would be built to LEED standards, providing Park West Village and the city with an innovative, environmentally-progressive facility
- ◆ Construction would employ union labor exclusively

Before construction begins at Park West Village, throughout the construction process and after the new Jewish Home begins operation, Jewish Home is committed to a collaborative relationship with the community. Our existing Community Advisory Board would be augmented by Park West Village residents. Jewish Home will participate with the Construction Coordinating Council to ensure that construction is planned and conducted in close consultation with neighbors. Agreements for mitigation of construction impact, a collaborative process with the community on visual design elements, and a process for ongoing communication and dispute resolution would be put in place before construction commences.

This plan to move to Park West Village also has significant advantages for Jewish Home and the Upper West Side community.

- ◆ The new location remains in the midst of the West Side community that we have served for 125 years, and will continue to serve in the future.
- ◆ The new location will allow the creation of an efficient, technologically-innovative facility designed to best meet the needs of our thousands of clients and their families.
- ◆ The new facility will minimize stress and relocation issues for frail, elderly residents since the new nursing home will not have to be built in phases, literally around them.
- ◆ The new facility will protect hundreds of jobs and minimize staff transition issues.
- ◆ The retention of the Kaufman Building by Jewish Home will increase the stock of affordable senior housing on the Upper West Side.

Finally, there are major positive ramifications for our neighbors on 105th and 106th Street and environs: there will be no construction activity on the site of our present campus for at least the next four years as our new skilled nursing facility is built at 100th Street and, importantly, once we are ready to move our residents and staff to 100th Street, the construction period at 106th Street will be much shorter than if we had to build our new nursing home there in phases, literally around our residents. This interim period of several years before the commencement of construction at 106th Street also provides ample time for the community to make plans to achieve the best process possible for the new construction.

Jewish Home Lifecare provides hundreds of long-term care beds, short-term rehabilitation care for elders so they can return to their own homes. We also provide at-home care for hundreds of elderly so they can remain living in their own apartments, and each day conducts an Adult Day Care program that brings hundreds of elders together for socialization, cultural events, nutritious meals and health monitoring.

On behalf of the staff of Jewish Home Lifecare, I look forward to a continuing and productive dialogue and open communication so that our historic and vital mission can endure.

Sincerely,


Audrey S. Weiner, DSW, MPH.
President & CEO