



New York, NY
September 25, 2020

Statement from Corinne Low, co-founder of the UWS Open Hearts Initiative:

We are so proud of the shelter residents who bravely stood up to the city and through their advocacy reversed the terrible decision to close the Harmonia. But we are beyond devastated that the Mayor is persisting in displacing the men at the Lucerne, this time to a vacant hotel downtown.

What does this accomplish? If there is a vacant socially distanced site available, shouldn't it be used to house those still in congregate settings on Ward's island? The Mayor's decision is the pinnacle of cowardliness. The Mayor has made a full transformation from so-called progressive Park Slope dad to Upper East Sider, siding with his neighbor Randy Mastro against the most vulnerable people of the city, people he ran claiming to represent.

The only thing that is accomplished through this move is further trauma. Project Renewal will need to reboot again in this new hotel location. How can they better serve their clients in a hotel site downtown than they can in one on the UWS? The answer is they can't. This whole nonsense about services is a facade to cover for simple selfishness. If Randy Mastro's clients actually cared one iota about the people involved, they would not want to put them through a traumatizing move, that will disrupt their care and put them at risk of relapse.

We have built transformative community bonds with the shelter residents at The Lucerne. They have told us they feel embraced and supported by their community in a way they have never previously experienced. Why has the Mayor made it his singular mission to destroy this? Doesn't he have better things to do? Couldn't he be improving lives, instead of disrupting them? This move is supposed to happen October 5th—the Mayor has 10 days to decide if this is what he wants his legacy to be.

We will be holding a press conference at 1pm Sunday at the Lucerne, before continuing to serve our neighbors at our Free Store event at 2pm at The Belleclaire.