August 19, 2024

The Honorable Eric L. Adams

Office of the Mayor of the City of New York

City Hall

New York, NY 10007

The Honorable David C. Banks

NYC Public Schools

52 Chambers Street

New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks,

As you have stated on many occasions, NYC's future largely depends on affordable housing and education. We applaud your efforts to improve educational options for NYC families and also, to build more affordable housing to address this decades-long chronic problem threatening New York's future.

When the historic former Calhoun School building at 160 West 74th Street was listed for sale by Cushman & Wakefield for market-rate housing, although we lamented the loss of a beloved school which has operated since 1897, we also understood the need for permanent housing.

The building was sold to a private equity firm, Bayrock Capital  for $14 million and at a Community Board 7 meeting earlier this year, we learned Bayrock no longer planned on creating housing but instead entered into a private agreement with the City, DHS and Volunteers of America, without any community input,  to turn the historic former Calhoun School building into a dangerously overcrowded, long term homeless shelter with 146 beds, 50 staff and significant community opposition.

We recognize the tremendous pressure you are both under to house the migrant and homeless communities as well as the pressure of fulfilling the new state mandated lower student to teacher ratios to reduce class sizes.

Our neighborhood group, Friends of the UWS, was formed after that recent CB7 meeting, when questions and concerns, as well as those of our Council Member, Gale Brewer, were ignored and we were deliberately misled.

Chancellor Banks, as you explained at the July 16th Police Athletic League luncheon, the Class Size Mandate, which requires the New York City DOE to create a five-year class size reduction plan for all New York City K-12 classes, is adding pressure for more schools. The former Calhoun School building at 160 West 74th St. has been a school for over 145 years and with the new school year quickly approaching, this site could be easily and quickly ﬁtted for a school purpose at minimal taxpayer expense.

Mr. Mayor, we ask you to intervene to reverse the dead-of-night, bait and switch decision crafted behind closed doors that caught the community off guard. We know this crass move is contrary to the otherwise open and honest manner in which you vowed to operate.

We appreciate your pledge of transparency and your willingness to listen to New York’s citizens and the needs of the city’s diverse neighborhoods. Please stand up for the values you have championed and against this ill-advised scheme.

We urge you to meet with us directly as soon as possible so we can address this matter with you both firsthand. We are available at a member’s home at 154 West 74th Street, Apt. 4B, on the evening of Thursday, August 29th or anytime during the following two weeks.

Please let us know what works best. We look forward to confirming this visit in the coming days.

Thank you.

The Friends of UWS

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CC:

The Honorable Sheena Wright, First Deputy Mayor

The Honorable Ingrid Lewis-Martin, Chief Advisor to the Mayor

The Honorable Camille Joseph Varlack, Chief of Staff to the Mayor

The Honorable Meera Joshi, Deputy Mayor for Operations

The Honorable Maria Torres-Springer, Deputy Mayor for Housing, Economic Development, Workforce

The Honorable Anne Williams-Isom, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services The Honorable Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

The Honorable Gale Brewer, New York City Council District 6; Chair of Committee on Oversight and Investigations

The Honorable Linda Rosenthal, Assembly District 67

The Honorable Brad Hoylman-Sigal, 47th State Senate District