

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT OUR LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD, INC.**  
**830 Park Avenue**  
**New York, NY 10021**

February 11, 2020

Gale Brewer  
Manhattan Borough President  
1 Centre Street, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Keith Powers  
Council Member, District 4  
211 East 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 1205  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Manhattan Borough President Brewer and Council Member Powers,

We at the Committee to Protect Our Lenox Hill Neighborhood and our 6,500 supporters want to thank you for your advocacy in the discussion of Northwell's proposed redevelopment plan of Lenox Hill Hospital. Throughout the task force process, your unwavering leadership and selfless civic values have been evident to the community. For many of us, you have come to represent a fairness and decency that has largely disappeared from political discourse in our country. New York City is lucky to have you both!

We want to take this opportunity to present our perspective, as you work to understand the impasse between a New York City community that would like to see a responsible upgrade of Lenox Hill Hospital within the current zoning footprint and an intransigent Northwell which continues, despite overwhelming opposition, to move forward with unworkable solutions.

Many of us involved in the Committee have significant nonprofit board experience and understand how nonprofit entities operate and serve their mission. It is obvious that directing a cultural, educational or health care institution is a very different errand from overseeing a for-profit enterprise. Simply put, a nonprofit like Lenox Hill Hospital has a mission to serve the public good and, in return, enjoys certain privileges like not paying taxes on the money it makes. When it comes time for a major change like the Lenox Hill expansion plan, the usual protocol is to build consensus among stakeholder groups by talking openly and proactively about what needs to happen and why.

Northwell and Lenox Hill chose to comport themselves otherwise, which has resulted in a sharp divide between the hospital and the community it serves. They acted in bad faith by unilaterally presenting a massive redevelopment plan without any community input. Northwell has acknowledged that the plan was in the works for years and, by all accounts, was shrouded in secrecy. Importantly, no meaningful discussion with Northwell and the hospital occurred until you stepped in with the idea of a task force. Not surprisingly, community trust in Northwell and the hospital has eroded and the residents of Lenox Hill perceive a monolithic institution attempting to impose its will on their neighborhood. Needless to say, a bad start.

All of this comes on the heels of Lenox Hill's poor behavior as a neighbor in the community. For the decade or so that Northwell has owned Lenox Hill, the hospital has shown complete disregard for the residential neighborhood that surrounds it. Oxygen deliveries occur at all hours of the night, its delivery trucks illegally park outside apartment buildings, its ambulances race in and out, blocking traffic and sounding sirens, its trash and medical waste are littered on our streets. Northwell would lead you to believe that all of these problems will go away with their redevelopment plan. Why should they be given any benefit of the doubt? The public safety and quality of life issues that our community has endured for years all have simple solutions. Basic logistics management could result in oxygen deliveries during the day; delivery trucks could be directed to double park outside Lenox Hill and not block apartment building entrances; ambulances could be managed off-street and more efficiently; and Lenox Hill could repurpose space so that it can contain trash and medical waste. To be clear, the management team at Lenox Hill has chosen to conduct its operations in this manner with a seeming lack of care for the neighborhood.

From a zoning perspective, what Northwell and Lenox Hill have proposed is unprecedented in any residential neighborhood in Manhattan. They are not seeking a modest accommodation but rather a complete overhaul of zoning regulations that have been in place, in some cases, for over 100 years. We would submit to you that the infrastructure in the community simply cannot handle the scale of the proposed redevelopment. While Northwell's theoretical plan, presented in the last task force meeting, to remove the outrageous condo tower on Park Avenue is a step in the right direction, it is not enough. Lenox Hill is primarily a residential neighborhood and not a suitable location for an industrial-scale medical campus. We demand that our neighborhood be protected by enforcing the zoning limits on all building on the block. The burden of proof for any expansion should be on Northwell, not on the community which is faced with their grandiose plans, presented without justification.

We also find Northwell's claims of health care needs to be spurious and completely lacking reasoned support. While we acknowledge the need for single rooms, the target number of beds should be supported by historical utilization data. If the redevelopment plan is allowed to proceed, Lenox Hill would have over 100,000 square feet of emergency room space between its downtown and Upper East Side divisions. This is particularly outrageous given Northwell has presented no acceptable solution for increased ambulance traffic on our crowded neighborhood streets. In our

view, a dedicated mother/baby hospital is not a need but rather a luxury. And lastly, none of these supposed needs are supported by demographic data or best practices in modern healthcare. Instead, we are asked to trust a hospital network with a troubling history of ethical lapses.

So now what?

We respectfully ask that you go back to Michael Dowling and Northwell and tell them to temper their aspirations and propose a significantly downsized plan that adheres to the existing zoning envelope and serves the true health care needs of our community. If their objective instead is to build a massive destination medical center, there are many other locations in Manhattan and New York City where they can pursue their vision without such a destructive impact on a long-established residential community.

To be clear, we support Lenox Hill Hospital as a community hospital and want to find a mutually acceptable solution. But shoehorning a flagship hospital into a residential neighborhood which cannot handle it, and without a discernible need, is a recipe for failure and conflict with the residents.

As always, we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Committee to Protect Our Lenox Hill Neighborhood, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew D. Soussloff". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Andrew D. Soussloff  
President