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**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS**  
**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #10**  
**FOR FY 2013**  
**AUGUST 1, 2011**

**Opening Statement**

Bronx Community Board #10 is one of the largest Board service areas in the Borough of the Bronx. It is primarily characterized by 1-3 family homes, situated on tree shaded streets. There are a few multiple dwellings concentrated in the Pelham Bay, Zerega and Westchester Square portions of the Board. However, the Board is the host community to Co-op City, one of the largest cooperative housing developments in the United States. One of the most interesting communities within the Board's service area is City Island. This nautically themed community is home to several America's Cup Yacht Race winners, and resembles a quaint New England fishing village. The Board is also home to the City's largest park, Pelham Bay, in which Orchard Beach, the Bartow Pell Mansion and the Thomas Pell Wildlife Preserve are situated.

**History**

The areas that comprise Bronx Community Board #10 were once part of the Village of Westchester and before that, the private estates of several families, most notably the Bartow and Pell families. A significant battle was fought during the American Revolution between British and Colonial forces, in the vicinity of Orchard Beach. The Battle of Pell's Point delayed the British advance, allowing Washington's troops to regroup in White Plains. The Westchester Square area is home to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, one of the oldest churches in New York City, and one that received its charter from George III, the last ruling British monarch over America. Westchester Square is also home to the Ferris Family Cemetery, with graves dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and the historic Collis P. Huntington Free Library.

**Boundaries**

North-New England Thruway, Eastern Prolongation of Park Drive, Park Drive, Long Island Sound, City Line; East-Western boundary of Pelham Bay Park, Eastchester Bay Long Island Sound (including City and Hart Islands); South-East River; West – Westchester Creek, Northern Prolongation of Westchester Creek to Waterbury Avenue, Waterbury Avenue, Westchester Avenue, Castle Hill Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Silver Street, Eastchester Road, Blondell Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Hutchinson River Parkway, New England Thruway.

**Public Safety**

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct. The 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct has one of the largest patrol areas in the Borough ranging from the Zerega community to Co-op City and is ten square miles. Yet, the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct with a complement of one hundred and fifty officers has one of the smallest contingents of any Precinct in the City, given its service area. Additionally, the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct is responsible for police services within Co-op City, home to over 50,000 residents and while Co-op City does have its own public safety force that works well with the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct, both the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct and Co-op City could benefit from a satellite sub-station within the housing complex and shared patrol resources.

Due to increases in criminal activities, especially burglary and drug sales, the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct needs additional officers and patrol vehicles. The drug trade within our Board's service areas is sophisticated, in that it is not related to simple street sales, instead, the drugs are sold via a complicated network of cell phone operations and hand-offs of illegal substances between vehicles. The Board is at the confluence of several major highway networks, and the drug dealers use this to their advantage. Therefore, it is imperative that a Narcotics Module, operated under the auspices of the Organized Crime and Control Bureau, be placed at the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct on a permanent basis.

The Board service areas have also seen an increase in the theft of car parts. The Board consists primarily of 1-3 family homes with driveways. Residents park their vehicles in their driveways at the end of the day. Too often, of late, when they go to use their vehicle in the morning, they find that tires, tire rims, mirrors, lights or fenders are missing. The community has fallen victim to a brazen organized group, intent on stealing car parts, under the cover of night. Toyotas and Hondas are the primary targets. In response to this problem, and to their credit, the 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct has responded by allocating their already limited resources to patrol duty. Additional patrol officers and cars that are marked and unmarked are needed to patrol the residential blocks.

The Board has also seen a rise in quality of life offenses such as excessive noise particularly bars and clubs. Graffiti is on the rise in all sections of the community. Anti-graffiti complaints, especially on the second stories of buildings should be reviewed for graffiti removal efforts. The 45<sup>th</sup> Precinct maintains a photographic record of graffiti tags reported to them. This record is maintained to assist in the identification of gang related tags. There should be greater coordination between the Department of Sanitation and Economic Development Corporation, the agencies offering free graffiti removal and the

Precinct. This way the graffiti locations identified by the Police Department could be cleaned in a more timely fashion.

There must be recognition on the part of the Criminal Justice system that the type of crimes committed within the Board's service areas are by and large being committed by recidivists, people with a long history of involvement in the criminal justice system. Our Courts and our Assistant District Attorneys must be sensitive to the needs of our communities and recognize the nature of the criminals perpetrating these acts and act accordingly with respect to setting of bail, and sentencing.

Several years ago, the FDNY in a cost cutting effort, removed the ambulance at Orchard Beach. From the moment that this became public, the Board had opposed it and demanded that it be returned. During the summer months, thousands of people utilize the Beach. The only form of medical transport at the Beach consists of gator vehicles that can travel over sand at a rapid rate, bringing people to a first aid station. In the event of a major health care problem such as a heart attack or a drowning, an ambulance is needed to save the person's life. With no ambulance at the Beach, and the nearest one being over ten minutes away, the health and safety of Beach patrons is being compromised. It is imperative that ambulance service be restored to Orchard Beach immediately.

### **Transportation**

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by several bus lines and the IRT #6 Train. The MTA due to budget constraints, had to seriously alter the schedules of the buses to accommodate its fiscal realities. To its credit, the agency tried to preserve the basic level of service to our communities, but there must be a commitment on the part of the political establishment to support mass transit, particularly in the geographically isolated communities of the northeast Bronx.

The Board has also advocated for commuter ferry service to serve Co-op City and other areas of the northeast Bronx. Additionally, the Board has long advocated for a Metro-North station to be built in Co-op City's Section #5. Both proposals would offer residents of the Board's service areas with quicker access to the City's central business district.

Road construction has not kept pace with the production of new cars and trucks. The number of vehicles using the roads has far outstripped the capacity of those roads to handle the traffic. Transportation planners must develop alternatives to car and truck transport. There is no reason that residents of various Bronx community boards should be burdened by pollution belching truck traffic on the New England Thruway, Bruckner Expressway and the Cross Bronx Expressway, when a readily available alternative exists in the railroad. For over a century, railroads have served the Bronx, and served it well. With the Oak Point Rail Yard in the southern portion of Borough serving as through passage from New England to the South, most freight needs and bulk cargo transport should be shifted to trains away from trucks. The trains could deliver the goods to central

locations like Oak Point, and smaller trucks could deliver these commodities to retail locations and homes. By shifting the shipment of cargo away from trucks, congestion on the highways would dissipate and the quality of the air will be markedly improved.

### **Health and Human Services**

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by Bronx Municipal Hospital Center, the Jack D. Weiler Hospital of Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center and Westchester Square Medical Center. Surveys of the health of the Borough and Community Board #10 have revealed high rates of asthma; problems associated with childhood diseases; low birth weight babies; increases in HIV infection; geriatric; and mental health issues. Health planners should concentrate their efforts on preventive medicine. To their respective credit, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Health and Hospitals Corporation and Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center have excellent outreach programs and the Board applauds their efforts. However, it is vitally important that these efforts be supported and the Board will work with these providers to improve the health of our neighbors through assisting them in outreach efforts, such as health fairs.

The Board is experiencing a disturbing trend in Westchester Square; this community has seen a marked increase in the number of facilities operated by mental health, drug treatment and behavioral modification agencies. The Board understands the needs of our neighbors, and has welcomed these agencies in the past, but health planners, particularly at the State level should understand that the Westchester Square community has been inundated by these agencies and suffers from over saturation. Such a high concentration of group homes and other treatment facilities in one geographic area is unhealthy, from a community perspective. Without proper planning and funding, this situation will only grow worse, because the New York State Office of Mental Health, plans to build a replacement facility for the existing Bronx Psychiatric Center, and alternative plans for the patients have not been announced, as of yet.

The New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) placed a transitional shelter within the Westchester Square community. This was done without a fair share analysis or a true public hearing, where the community's opinions and input would be solicited. The shelter structure is a failed condominium and at the time of the placements, no contract existed between the sponsor of the shelter and the City.

In response to a series of issues surrounding community notification of facilities, the City Council drafted Intro. No.79 - A Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Services to notify the affected community prior to locating transitional housing for the homeless. The Board agreed with the spirit of the proposed legislation, but felt that other stakeholders in the community, beyond the Council member (s) and the Community Board be consulted, as well. Additionally, the Board suggests that DHS conduct fair and objective public hearings on these matters and the agency fund a robust outreach unit.

Another major health issue facing the Board is the incidence of air and noise pollution posed by trucks. The Board service area, sits at the junction of the New England

Thruway, the Bruckner Expressway and the Cross Bronx Expressway. This road network serves as the principal north-south, east-west route for interstate trucking and on any given day, these roads are subject to the most horrendous traffic jams. Miles of trucks buses and cars are stopped on these roads for protracted periods of time, polluting the air. As a result, the ambient air quality of the surrounding community suffers. The incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses are on the rise at all of the area hospitals. The perpetual horn blowing and reckless driving habits of the motorists, also detracts from the quality of life in our community. Fortunately, in partnership with our State Senator, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Bronx Community Board #10 succeeded in having air monitors installed within the service area, to register the amount of particulates in the air. Once this information is compiled, it is hoped that the Board may utilize it to develop rational transportation policy that is not so dependent upon trucks.

### **Education**

Bronx Community Board #10 is home to fine grammar and intermediate schools. It is also home to three high schools, Herbert H. Lehman, the Renaissance High School and Harry S. Truman. The schools in the Board service area are doing well and young people are entering college. This was not always the case, but the schools and test scores have improved. The Board will work with the community and its educators to see that adequate funds from the State budget are dedicated to area schools. The Board strongly believes in internships and encourages the Department of Education and the leadership of Herbert H. Lehman, Renaissance and Harry S. Truman high schools to explore to the fullest, opportunities with local businesses and government to give their students opportunities that will enable them to succeed in working world.

### **Parks and Recreation**

Bronx Community Board #10 is the host Community Board for Pelham Bay Park, the largest park in the City's system. It is also home to many community parks, which provide a welcome respite from the rigors of urban life. These are resources that must be preserved and enhanced. The Board is grateful that the City's central administration has announced plans to build a golf course, children's playground and river walk for Ferry Point Park East. New pathways, fields and a comfort station are planned for Ferry Point Park West. The Board would like to see the establishment of private and public partnerships for parks. Parks such as Owen Dolen, with a recreation center and greensward, in the midst of a commercial area, are an oasis of calm and beauty. The Board is grateful that the Department of Parks and Recreation has developed sweeping plans for the renovation this Park, and has worked, and will continue to work with electeds, and other stakeholders in the community on renovation plans. The Board is optimistic that Owen Dolen will be a showpiece in our Borough.

However, more resources must be brought to the parks for cultural enrichment, nature programs and support of the Urban Park Rangers, Playground Assistants, Parks Enforcement and maintenance staff, particularly in the area of tree pruning. The Board, through its Parks and Recreation Committee, will continue its efforts to bring more services to our parks.



## **Housing and Zoning**

Bronx Community Board #10 has experienced unprecedented growth in residential construction. Often this construction was not consistent with the existing housing in the area. This has led to a zoning resolution that downsized new construction. However, developers continue to propose new projects that either flout or come close to violating the zoning provisions. It therefore becomes incumbent upon the Board, to do its utmost to assess these projects and work to overcome the more onerous aspects of development. Community Boards are mandated to provide advisory opinions on land use and zoning matters. It is important that the City's central administration commit to supporting Community Boards, so that they are able to provide quality opinions on the many development projects that come before them.

Recently, our Board supported a New York City Department of City Planning proffered initiative, known Lower Density Growth Management Amendment to the Zoning Resolution, which limits the development of daycare and medical facilities to certain standards and requires parking. The Board carefully monitors the development plans for the area, ensuring that the provisions of the Amendment are adhered to.

Our Board firmly believes any City agency that is in a position to grant a permit, license or any other document, granting an entity permission to conduct a business or service activity, should come to the Community Board with that information before the project is permitted or the license or permit is granted. Too often, we are asked to react to the imposition of a service or the granting of a license or permit for an entity to conduct a business or produce a service, after the fact. Had the community board been given an opportunity to comment on matters, when they were originally proposed or under consideration, difficulties in securing acceptance for the business, service or the entity providing it, could be avoided.

## **Emergency Management**

Much of Bronx Community Board #10 is shoreline property, and as such, is subject to the negative effects of storms. Central to the City's emergency response system in the Community Board, are Civilian Emergency Response Teams or (CERTs). Each CERT TEAM is made up of trained community residents, who have agreed to assist the NYPD, FDNY and EMS during emergencies. Currently, the Co-op City community has a CERT TEAM. The Board will work with the community organizations to facilitate the establishment of additional CERT TEAMS in the Board's service area.

## **Economic Development**

The attraction and retention of business in the Board's service areas is of utmost importance. The Board established a specific committee, known the Economic Development Committee to assist local businesses with information and ombudsman services. A case in point, is the Westchester Square Business Improvement District or BID. The Board provided a series of services to the BID's Steering Committee. The BID will consist of property owners who have made a commitment to the community in transforming an older shopping district, into a revitalized economic entity. The Westchester Square experience should be replicated across the other Board's shopping areas along City Island Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Crosby Avenue, Westchester

Avenue and the Dreiser, Einstein and Bartow Avenue Shopping Centers in Co-op City. The Board believes that the City's economic future lies in the preservation and enhancement of its older shopping areas. To this end, the Board calls upon the City's Economic Development Corporation and Small Business Services to assist the older shopping areas of the Board.

The Board's business communities are surrounded by regional malls that provide free parking to its patrons. The Board's older shopping areas do not enjoy such benefits. Patrons using these areas must pay for parking at meters. The Ferry Point portion of the Board is scheduled to receive major retail development, which will again offer free parking to its patrons. The Board would like to see the City's Economic Development Corporation consider plans for the creation of public parking, so that these older shopping districts can survive.

Bronx Community Board #10 is home to a large and fairly continuous waterfront. The Board realizes that a waterfront plan was adopted by the Department of City Planning, but the Board would like to see these projects be included in future analysis for the waterfront: the dredging of Westchester Creek to allow for the passage of fuel barges from the local oil depot, the further enhancement of Westchester Creek as a recreational area, complimenting Ferry Point Park, and the dredging of the Hammond Cove Marina, to improve opportunities for recreational boating.

### **Environmental Quality**

The Board receives inquiries from its constituents on a variety of issues. Most often they center on the cleanliness of public spaces, the need for increased parking, concerns over housing that was built, but never sold and many other issues. In response, the Board is working with its partners in government to try and address these matters. Air quality is of great importance to this Board. One way to improve the quality of the air that we breath, and ultimately the quality of our lives is to plant trees and create greenstreets throughout the Board's service area. To this end, Bronx Community Board #10 has forwarded dozens of locations to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, under the PlaNYC Program.

### **Conclusion**

This statement of District Needs has been submitted by Bronx Community Board #10, in an effort to familiarize the appropriate government agencies with the needs of our communities. This Board represents vibrant communities that are the social and economic bedrock of the Bronx. The Board looks forward to working with its partners in government to ensure our quality of life, and the continued viability and growth of our neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Kearns  
District Manager